

SOME
Motives *and* Incentives
TO THE
LOVE of GOD,

Pathetically discoursed of
In a LETTER to a FRIEND.
BY THE
Hon. ROBERT BOYLE.



LONDON:
Printed for W. OWEN, at Homer's Head, Temple-Bar,
AND
R. GOADBY, at Sherborne, Dorsetshire.

M. DCC. LII.

SOME
Motives and Incentives

TO THE

Love of GOD

In a Letter to a Friend.

BY THE

Rev. ROBERT BOLLE.



LONDON:

Printed by W. Owen, in Strand.

AND

R. Colver, in Strand.

M.DCCC.LII.



TO THE
COUNTESS
OF
WARWICK.

My Dear Sister,



Expect you should somewhat wonder, that after having, for above eleven years, been careful to keep this follow-

A 2

ing

Epistle Dedicatory.

lowing letter from the public view, and that too notwithstanding the solicitations (not to say importunity) of divers illustrious persons, and even your Commands to release it from its confinement; I should now, at length, give way to its passing abroad into the world, and its making you a public and solemn address. Wherefore judging myself obliged to give you an account of a paper, for which you have been long pleased so highly and so obligingly to concern yourself, I must, to remove your wonder, inform you, that I am reduced to this publication in my own defence. For, whilst I was far from dreaming of permitting this epistle to pass out of my closet, it happened, that a broken copy of it did (by I know not what misfortune for me) fall into the hands
of

Epistle Dedicatory.

of a necessitous person, who would needs perswade himself, that by printing it, he might relieve some of his present wants ; and thereupon proffered to sell the copy for a sum money. But my good fortune leading him to a Stationer, to whom my name was not unknown, he very civilly sent forthwith notice of the proposition that was made him, and after came himself to acquaint me, that the copy about which he had been treated with, being but one of two or three that were then abroad, some or other of them would, questionless, soon find the way to the press. This unwelcome accident did little less trouble than surprize me ; for, besides that it imposed on me the necessity of a publication I had so long declined ; and besides that I

Epistle Dedicatory.

knew, that composures * of a very differing nature being expected from me, the appearing of this, instead of them, would make this unwelcome to many, though it had fewer imperfections than it has: besides these things, (I say) my sight was then, and is still, so impaired by a distemper in my eyes; and the hours I could dispose of, were so pre-engaged to philosophical themes, that I could not promise myself so much as to read it over before its going to the Printer. But considering after all this, that the copy I had by me was like to prove more full, and less faulty, than any of those that some endeavoured to obtrude upon the world, I thought it

* Some treatises relating to experimental philosophy.

Epistle Dedicatory.

it less inconvenient to venture mine own abroad, than to run the hazard of a surreptitious edition of a discourse, that could so ill bear the appearing with any other blemishes than those it brought with it into the world from my pen. And therefore having put it into the hands of persons, whose eminent abilities, the more knowing part of the nation has long and justly admired, and begged their impartial opinion and castigations of it, (giving them entire liberty to alter or expunge whatever they disliked;) and finding (by hastily turning over the leaves) that their castigations were only enough to let me see, that they had heedfully read it over; and were accompanied with encouragements, which care was taken to keep me from looking upon as

beginning

A 4

meer

Epistle Dedicatory.

meer compliments; I let it go to the press, without so much as having once perused it, or heard it read over, since the Stationer first gave me the advertisement I told you of: Which I made the less scruple to do, because a critic, whose judgment and piety I much reverence, seriously endeavoured to perswade me, that I ought not in conscience to decline publishing what he was pleased to think proper to kindle or cherish the flames of divine love in the breasts of the readers. And my haste itself did afterwards promise me these advantages, that notwithstanding my book's not coming forth sooner, I should not lose the excuse of youth I had when it was written; nay, and that the faulty passages which may be met with in it, will, perhaps, be charged

Epistle Dedicatory.

charged upon those that suffered them to pass uncorrected, when they had so absolute a power to expunge or reform them.

These, and the like motives, having induced me to consent to the publication of the following letter, I needed not deliberate long, to whom I should address it. For, since that accomplished Lindamor, whom it so much concerned, has left the world, there is no person in it to whom this address is any thing near so due, as unto you, dear sister. It was at that delicious Leeze, where you are now the mistress, that this letter was written; and it was of you that I borrowed those hours I spent in writing it. It was to you that I shewed it almost sheet by sheet, before I re-

Epistle Dedicatory.

solved to send it away. It is you that can best excuse the imperfections of it, as knowing not only the more obvious, but the more private avocations, and other disadvantages, among which it was penned. It is you that have ever since solicited me to divulge it, and have given me the greatest encouragements to do so, not only by those solicitations which implied your own favourable opinion of it, but by procuring me (by concealing or disguising my name) the unsuspected opinions of divers competent judges. In a word, this address belongs upon so many scores to you, that I could not make it any where else, without manifestly wronging you.

I know, dear sister, that it is not usual to dedicate books to so near a relation

Epistle Dedicatory.

relation ; and that it is not usual in dedicatory epistles, both to depreciate what one has written, and to extol the person that one writes to, especially if it be one of your sex and quality. But you know too, that I never swore allegiance to custom, and therefore will not, I suppose, wonder to see me as little solicitous, to conform to it on this occasion as on others. In an age, when so few persons have merit enough to keep that from being flattery, which should be but praise, I am not at all ambitious of casting myself upon the unhappy necessity of either flattery, or appearing rude ; when by better chusing the objects of my addresses, I can, as occasion requires, give praises, without untruth, or forbear them without incivility. Nor dare I presume, tha

Epistle Dedicatory.

a lie ceases to be a fault, by being put into a dedicatory epistle; as antiently the hurtful beasts forgot their pernicious nature, when brought into the ark. Not to mention that books of devotion have generally the strange and unhappy fate, of being less welcome to them that most, than to them that less, need them.

As for the discourse I present you, though my opinion of it may be guessed at, by the privacy to which I have so long confined it; yet because, as in phyfic, to have a good opinion of the medicine, and the doctor; so in books of devotion, (which are a kind of a phyfic for the mind) to have one of the composition of the writer, both inclines us to look after the prescriptions, and
advan-

Epistle Dedicatory.

advantages their operations; for this reason I shall say nothing to disparage a discourse, which is of a nature to aim more at the being practised by the readers, than the being pardoned; and shall not at all repine to see it find from the public as favourable a reception, as it has hitherto met with in closets.

And now, dear sister, though I know you will not, yet, I doubt, my other readers will expect, that this letter should, according to the mode of epistles dedicatory, be concluded with commendations of you, and compliments to you. It being almost as much out of fashion in such addresses to omit giving praises, as it is to believe the praises given on such occasion.

Epistle Dedicatory.

occasion. But, though I can praise you without either disbelieving myself, or fearing to be disbelieved by any that knows you; yet, besides that our relation, and our friendship, would make such a way of writing misbecoming me on all occasions; I know your piety and your modesty would peculiarly disallow it upon this; where the subject I am to entertain you with, is of such a nature, as would make a flaunting address, but a very unsuitable introduction to it. The nature of my theme, as well as the strictness of your virtue, and our friendship, forbidding me here to celebrate you, otherwise than by letting the world see, that I dare, even in a dedicatory address, without fear of displeasing you, forbear to celebrate you. And if it be

Epistle Dedicatory.

be demanded, why then I refrain not likewise from writing to you a dedication? I shall answer, that I am unwilling to lose this opportunity of making a public acknowledgment, that as I have the honour to be your brother, and your friend, so I have the justice to think it very much my happiness to be so; especially, since you are pleased to assure me, that my relation to you has rather been the occasion than the ground of a friendship, that does, whilst it enjoyns me to profess myself without compliment, oblige me to be, with all the sincerity that is possible, my dear sister,

*Your most affectionate brother,
and most faithful humble servant,*

ROBERT BOYLE,

Epistle Dedicatory

be demanded, why then I set not
likewise him writing to you a ded-
ication, I shall answer, that I am
unwilling to lose this opportunity
of making a public knowledge
more, that as I have throughout to
be your brother, and your friend, so
I have the justice to think it very
much my happiness to be so; espe-
cially since you are pleased to ad-
vise, that my relation to you has re-
mained the same the occasion that the
ground of a friendship, that does
while it enjoys me to profit my-
self without complaint, obliges me
to be with all the sincerity that is
possible, my dear sister,

Your most affectionate brother,
and most faithful humble servant,

Robert Boyle



ADVERTISEMENTS

TO THE

READER.

(As they were written some years since, when some intelligent persons were to have a fight of the following discourse.)

TO prevent those scruples which else might arise in the perusal of the ensuing discourse, the reader of it is requested to take notice,

Advertisements to the Reader.

1st. That though ignorance hath been of late so much in fashion with many of our young nobility, that some passages of the ensuing papers may seem unfit to have been written to a young Gentleman, yet the person they were address'd to, being both a traveller, a linguist, and a scholar, it was not improper to discourse with him at the rate of supposing him so qualified.

2^d. That the ensuing letter was not written single, being but the last of divers; wherein love in general was confessed, justified, and celebrated; wherein the received way of making love was explicated, defended, and oppos'd; wherein constancy and inconstancy in love were argued for and against; wherein platonic love was explicated, celebrated, and wherein the cure of love was propos'd and prosecuted; wherein (to dispatch) the controverted points concerning love were discours'd of, in a way suited

Advertisements to the Reader.

suit'd to the several Themes ; and to the humours and principles of the supposed writers. But all the former papers, (written in compliment to a fair lady) though very free from the guilt of either licentiousness or prophaneness, have been by the author judg'd too little serious, either to appear alone, or to accompany the ensuing discourse, wherein he has express'd his own opinions, as in the former he but deduc'd those of imaginary persons.

3d. That the following paper was to have been attend'd by another, wherein the properties and duties of seraphic love were to have been explicated and insist'd on, but the author, before he had written that other, accidentally meeting with a French book *, wherein though what he had already discours'd of were not handled, he found that much of what he had design'd to set down was anticipated ;

* *L'Amour Divin, de Mr. du Moulin.*

Advertisements to the Reader.

ted; and the most pertinent considerations, his intended themes suggested, were skilfully displayed already; he feared it might be injurious to his readers, and himself, if he should either turn a transcriber of others notions, or decline the best thoughts belonging to his theme, that the less good ones might pass without suspicion for his own.

4th. That the ensuing trifle having been written in haste, and by snatches, amongst distracting avocations, and far from literary accommodations, is freely submitted to the censure of learned and impartial perusers, especially divines; who are by the author requested to believe its mistaken passages, and unwary expressions, (if it contain any such) to have been altogether unintentional, and such as they shall never find it to be more than one labour to make him discern and retract; he being resolved, by God's assistance, to continue still obsequious enough

Advertisements to the Reader.

enough to all clearer discoveries of truth, to be able to say, *Errare possum, hæreticus esse nolo*. And as he is on his part so resigned, and so willing to be rectified, so he expects this equity from those, to whose judgments he submits, that, considering he intended not to write a solemn and regular treatise, but a private and familiar epistle, they will pass by such unaccuratenesses as are wont to be incident to composers of this later nature. He presumed he might sometimes make bold with the vulgar laws of tenses, treating of an eternity than admits them not. He hoped, that the freedom taken in some of his expressions concerning love, and the wonted objects of it, would be excused, by its being exacted by the design he had upon Lindamor, though he had not (which yet he has) otherwise accounted for it*. He intends not to adopt

* In a dedication of all the fore-mentioned letters to my lady T. J.

Advertisements to the Reader.

adopt those (too often erroneous) traditions of the vulgar, whence he sometimes draws comparisons, that he may not deny himself the liberty taken by the generality of writers, (without excepting the learned sort of them) who scruple not, in popular composures, to make similes and allusions grounded on popular traditions and persuasions. As for those common places, which the method of our author's discourse allowed him not to decline, he hopes the reader will discern, by his way of writing, that he loves to use them, not as travellers, but as hunters use the high-ways; for the traveller, when he once gets into the road, makes it his business to keep in it; whereas the hunter, if he meets one lying in his way, is not fond of staying in it, but nimbly crosses it, or traverses so much of it, as is requisite to be past through in the pursuit of his game. And, lastly, if in some few passages of the following letter (especially

Advertisements to the Reader.

cially about the beginnng of it) the expressions are less grave and solemn than the design; the author hopes, that even they will yet appear tolerably serious, for the airiest parts of a letter, written by one young gentleman to another.



SOME

THE HISTORY OF THE

... the beginning of the ...
... and the ...
... the ...
... the ...
... the ...
... the ...



SOME



SOME
MOTIVES
TO THE
LOVE *of* GOD.

My dearest Lindamor,



Am very much delighted to learn, both by the voice of fame, and the information of much more credible relators, that Hermione's cold usage has cured you of the fever her scorching eyes had given you ; and that when once you found yourself reserved to shew what wonder her eyes were able to perform, you seasonably resolved to become an instance of the power rather of reason, than of

B

love ;

2 SERAPHIC LOVE.

love; and accordingly did yourself the right to frustrate the vain hopes your insulting mistress cherished to manifest in you; that her charms were capable to make your flame persevere, when her change had made it as well causeless as hopeless. I could wish indeed for your sake, that you owed your cure more entirely to your reason, and less to your resentment; that the extraction of your freedom may no ways blemish it. But since unallayed satisfactions are joys too heavenly to fall to many men's shares on earth, I cannot but conclude, that your recovery, even on these terms, deserves I should congratulate it; for the French say truly, that *les plus courtes folies sont les meilleures*: and liberty being too high a blessing to be divestible of that nature by circumstances; I (that seldom deplore him, who, by losing his mistress, recovers himself) think that Hermione has but intentionally, not eventually, disobliged you; and hath made your flames a better return, by restoring you your own heart; than she could have done by exchanging her's for it. But that which not least endears to me your recovery, is, that I am assured by persons from whom I dare credit even so welcome news, that my endeavours proved so
happy

happy as to be conducive to it, and that the considerations I ventured to present you, did at least so far contribute to your freedom, as to give you the desire and the design of regaining it. For I hope I need not tell you, that I seldom use endeavours, whose prosperousness is more welcome to me, than those that aspire to serve Lindamor. And though I cannot ever pay you any great services in relation to my vastly greater desires, yet I can scarce do you little ones, in relation to the delight resulting from the having done any. Nor has the joy which this success of my discourses brings me, being sparingly encreased by my having ventured them with more desire, than expectation, of their prospering, and less out of any strong hope they would succeed, than out of an unwillingness to leave the means I thought least improbable unessayed; being invited to excite you to greater hopes than I durst allow myself for you, by the example of generals, who, whatsoever distrustful thoughts they harbour in their breasts, suppose (that before the battle) to make their soldiers fight successfully, it is as well conducive as requisite, by encouraging orations, to make them think they shall do so. For although I endeavoured indeed to persuade you,

4 SERAPHIC LOVE.

that reason being born sovereign of the passions, though her lenity or supineness do sometimes both occasion and permit their usurpations, she is seldom so divested of her native power, but that whensoever she pleaseth to employ what she hath left, she is able to resume what she hath lost: and though I was willing you should believe, that to perfect what your resentment had begun, was a task so easy, that the victory was as much in your power, as the resolution of attempting it; yet, notwithstanding all this, I say, I was once half persuaded, that to undertake the curing of a lover, was the next weakness to the being one. And, Lindamor, to deal ingenuously with you, your recovery hath circumstances in it, that make me very apprehensive, that you are not yet out of the danger of a relapse, and that you have not half so absolutely abandoned your former amorous constitution of mind, as the former idol of it. I know, that from a person, who for one that hath never yet been hurt by Cupid is accused of using him slightly and severely enough, you will expect endeavours to preserve you from relapses, by such dissuasions from love, as its votaries will scarce vouchsafe so mild a title to, as that of invectives against it.

And

SERAPHIC LOVE. 5

And I shall ingenuously acknowledge, Lindamor, that I have been sometimes no very unready satirist on that theme; and with a pen relishing of the liberty I cherished in my heart, endeavoured to disabuse those servile souls, that being born to reason, so far degraded themselves, as to boast solely an excess of passion; and had such low and narrow thoughts of felicity and misery, as to expect either from a woman's usage. All which I thought I might the freelier do, because having never known the infelicities of love, but in the sufferings of others, I might probably suppose, that my declamation against it would pass for the productions of my reason, not my revenge. But, Lindamor, though the extravagancies of some men's folly have been sometimes too great to let me avoid laughing somewhat satirically at it; yet I am really too little an enemy to love, unless excessive or misplaced by indistinct and disfiguring considerations, to present to you the noblest passion of the mind, as its most hideous and formidable disease.

SECT. I. To love, even with some passionateness, the person you would marry, is not only allowable but expedient, being almost ne-

6 SERAPHIC LOVE.

cessary to the duty of fixing your affection where you have once engaged your faith; for it hath been observed, that love doth seldom suffer itself to be confined by other matches than those of its own making. And few, but they, that are so wise as they see cause to be almost in love beforehand with those they marry, prove so honest, as afterwards to be in love with none else. Since therefore the marriage of a wise man supposes at least as high a degree of love, as he is capable to cherish without forfeiting that title; I can scarce disallow the being moderately in love, without being injurious to marriage, which is a relation, that though I can with much less reluctancy permit others, than contract myself; yet dare I not absolutely condemn a condition of life, as expedient to no man; without which, even paradise and innocence were not sufficient to compleat the happiness of the first man. Thus you see, Lindamor, that I do not promiscuously quarrel with all sorts of love, but endeavour only to possess you with this truth, that as antiently among the Jews, there were odoriferous unguents, which it was neither unusual nor unlawful to anoint themselves with, or bestow up-

on their friends ; but there was a certain peculiar composition too, of a precious ointment, which God having reserved to be employed in his own service, with that the perfuming of their friends was criminal and sacrilegious ; so there are regulated degrees of love, which it is not forbidden to harbour for a friend, a mistress, or a wife ; but there is too a certain peculiar strain, or, if I may so call it, heroic temperament of love, which wherever it is found, makes it belong as unalienable, as justly, unto God. A virtuous wife may love both her husband's relations and her own, and yet be truly said to love him with her whole heart ; because there is a certain unrivalled degree of kindness, and a peculiar sort of love, which constitutes true conjugal affection, that she confines to him, and reserves intirely for him, and would think it criminal to harbour for any other person ; so a religious soul may obey the command of loving God entirely, though she allow her affections other objects ; provided they be kept in a due subordination to, and kept from entering into competition with, that love, which ought to be appropriated to him ; and which results chiefly from an either altogether, or almost unincreaseable elevation, and vastness of af-

8 SERAPHIC LOVE.

fection ; from an entire resignation to, and an absolute dependance on, the loved party ; from a restless disquiet upon the least sense or doubt of her displeasure ; from a greater concern in her interests, than one's own ; from an expectation of no less than felicity or wretchedness from her friendship or indignation ; or, at least, a persuadedness, that nothing can be a greater happiness than her favour, or deserve the name of happiness without it. For wherever a passion has these properties, or any of them, conspicuous in it, cannot, but by being consecrated to God, avoid becoming injurious both to him and to itself. The very nobleness of it entitles him to it : as in some kingdoms, (and particularly here in England) tho' veins of coarser metals may belong to the owner of the soil they grow in, yet all the mines of the more perfect metals (as gold and silver) are by the law made mines royal, and belong to the king, to whom their value appropriates them. By reflecting upon this peculiar notion of love, you may be pleased, Lindamor, to interpret such indefinite expressions as you may meet with in the following discourse. And this love I have taken the freedom to stile *Seraphic Love*, not

SERAPHIC LOVE. 9

not out of any affectation of tumid words or titles, but, borrowing the name from (if the Romish divines be good marshals of the heavenly host) those nobler spirits of the celestial hierarchy, whose name ^a in the language to which it belongs expresses them to be of a flaming nature ; and whose employment (mentioned in the ^b evangelical prophet's mysterious vision) sufficiently points at the divine object, to which the flames that warm them aspire and tend. And methinks, Lindamor, that you should find it no faint invitation to embrace seraphic love, that you may have the advantage, by making yourself a rival to these glorious spirits, to make them your friends; and the honour to be engaged in a service where you are sure of such illustrious concurrents. At least if you be of the mind of that generous youth, (to whose successful valour the conquered world was both theatre and trophy) who refused to run

B 5

at

^a The name *Seraphim*, in Hebrew, springs from the root *Saraph*, which signifies to burn or flame, whence *Numb. xxi. 6.* those pernicious creatures, that our translators english *fiery Serpents*, are styled in the original *Hannechasin bas-seraphim*.

^b *Isaiah vi. 2, 3.*

TO SERAPHIC LOVE.

at the olympic games, because there were no monarchs to run with him. But I fear, Lindamor, I have a little digressed; since I might have told you in fewer words, that it is not my design in this paper to declaim against love in general, or make a solemn harangue of the fickleness of women; and that therefore, as when young gallants (such as you, Lindamor) are subject to cast away their love upon unfit objects, their discreet friends, sensible of the truth of the Italian comic's observation, that

*Onestà contra' amore
E troppo frale schermo
In giovinetto cuore ;*

*In youthful hearts bare virtues wont to prove
But a weak shield against the darts of love :*

without taking any more than necessary notice of their former fond and straggling passions, reclaim them by either matching them, or at least (in order thereunto) engaging their addresses to persons whose beauty or prerogatives may both legitimate or confine their affections : so I shall now endeavour to prevent the future matchings of your love to objects, that cannot deserve

SERAPHIC LOVE. II

deserve so transcendent and disinterested a one, as I have observed your's to have been; by preferring and engaging it to the true object that passion was born to, the noblest it can aspire to, and the most satisfying it can enjoy. Yes, Lindamor, as it hath hitherto been my not unprosperous task to unhood your soul, I shall now make it my business to shew her game to fly at. I see that love in Lindamor is too noble and predominant an affection, to be either easy or fit to be destroyed. It will therefore be my design, not to suppress your flame, but to address it. I wished it withdrawn from Hermione, not to annihilate it, but to transfigure it. I would not have a passion which wanted nothing but a due object to be seraphic love, like vulgar men, be swallowed up by death, the common fate; but be ennobled by a destiny like that of Enoch and Elias; who, having ceased to converse with mortals, died not, but were translated into heaven.

SECT. II. What has been said already, Lindamor, hath, it seems, sufficed to rectify your love, by disabusing it, and shewing you how unjustly it was placed on its former objects. Your

12 SERAPHIC LOVE.

proficiency in that invites me to proceed with you to a new lesson, and (mindful of that true saying of an eminent father, *Nemo aliquem amat, quem non vult esse meliorem*) to endeavour to exalt your passion by directing and settling it upon an object; the due contemplation of whose loveliness, may cure as perfectly all hurts received from any mortal beauty, as anciently the sight of the mysterious serpent on the pole did cure the hurts the fiery serpent gave. For since to gaze steadfastly on an outward beauty, where all your looking will but discover the same face, is found so effectual to kindle or to blow the fire of love, (which the Greeks prettily enough express by their *τὸ ὁρᾶν γινῆσαι τὸ ἐρᾶν*) how much must a due contemplation enamour us of that divine, and, though refulgent, yet ever more and more discoverable object, where attention and wonder still mutually excite and cherish each other? whence the zealous and perfectest lovers of God are the glorious angels, of whom our Saviour says, *That in heaven, they*
always

SERAPHIC LOVE. 13

always behold the face of his father which is in heaven^d; and those blessed saints, whose employment and whose happiness is in the Revelation expressed to be; *To follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes*^e. And those unblemished persons are in that place recorded to have kept themselves undefiled by mortal beauties, to teach us, that the nearer and clearer intuition, that heaven affords them of the glorious object of their passion, was not the cause of it, but the recompence; and that whilst they lived exiles here on earth, it was such a speculation, as I am recommending, Lindamor, to you, wherewith they lived (to borrow the expression used of Moses) *as seeing him who is invisible*^f; a sight, whose glory made them look on fading beauties with as undazzled and untroubled eyes, as eagles can be supposed to cast on glow-worms, when they have been newly gazing on the sun.

SECT. III. To engage your love, Lindamor, to this sublimest of objects, I shall desire; that

^d Matth. xviii. 20.
xi. 27.

^e Rev. xiv. 4.

^f Heb.

14 SERAPHIC LOVE.

that all that I have said to divert your former flames, and all that I may say to depreciate and discredit those degrading and disquieting amours, that are wont to inveigle mortals, may be looked upon as meant rather by way of preparative, than of motive, aiming but to disabuse and rectify your mind, that with composed and unprepossessed thoughts, you may judge of the object I propose to you. Which to qualify you to be but impartial to, this method seemed expedient; being but employed upon such a score, as that on which the Platonists used to premise certain virtues, which they (significantly enough) called purgative, to dispose and fit the mind for the reception of sublimer truths. As physicians, to clear the sight, are wont to purge the head, that the eye, freed from all darkening and disguising tinctures, may the more perfectly discern the objects presented to it. And certainly, the love I would persuade, is of a nature that makes nothing more conducive to it than the greatest uncloudedness of the eye, and the perfectest illustration of the object; which is such, that the clearest reason is the most advantageous light it can desire to be seen by. You know the story of that witty wench, who used merrily to wish her lovers all good qualities,

SERAPHIC LOVE. 15

ities, but a good understanding; for that, said she, would make them out of love with me. The divine object, to which I would prefer you, Lindamor, is so far from being obnoxious to a danger of that nature, that I need not disparage any other to enamour you of this. For the Creator is too full of excellencies to need to be recommended or set off by the creature's defects. He was sovereignly lovely in himself before they had a being; nor has his giving us that passion called love, made him the unfitter object for it. To love God, but because your mistress has personal faults, is a greater than any of those, for which you have declined her; and is such a solœcism in seraphic love, as it were in the Persian religion, (for that has yet embracers in the east, as those, that have there conversed with them, assure me) to make the spots that blemish the moon, the motives of their worshipping the sun. Hermione is a lady, to whose noble relations I am too much a servant, not to have a respect for her; and I cannot, without concluding her an extraordinary person, remember how lately she enjoyed the honour of captivating Lindamor; and tho' she has since, by injuriously declining, justly forfeited, the glorious title of his mistress; yet
the

16 SERAPHIC LOVE.

the qualities, that gave it her, made me, among divers others, like her so well, that it is now my quarrel to her, that she is not what she was. And therefore whatever may fall from my pen to her disadvantage, relates to her but as she was, or may again be, an obstacle to your devotedness to seraphic love. To engage you to which, (all this notwithstanding, Lindamor) I must do you the right to tell you, that God deserves the highest elevation of your love, though Hermione had not rejected it. Were she not only as handsome as you fancied her, but as constant as you wished her, her beauty and her friendship too concurring, could not have made her other than as disadvantageous as injurious a rival unto God; and in the very fruition of as obliging returns, as her kindness could have made your passion, she would have deserved but a more moderate degree of it. Angels, to whom women were never false or cruel, love their maker above all things; and he to whom St. John presents his adoration ‡, refused it for himself, to direct it unto God. Would not
your-

‡ Rev. xxii. 4. and xix. 1.

yourself; Lindamor, have thought your Hermione absolutely handsome, though Moors had not worn the Devil's livery; and the thing called deformity had been as much a stranger, as it is unwelcome to her sex. It is true, such is our frailty, that as the Israelites needed a cruel and oppressive bondage in Egypt, to make them resolve on returning to the blessed land of Canaan; so oftentimes the amorous soul needs the harsh usage of a disdainful mistress, to disgust it with its thralldom, and make it aspire to its more genuine and satisfying object. I may therefore allow Hermione's defects to have given you freedom and occasion to consider the prerogatives of seraphic love; but I must not allow them to be the chief motives of your embracing it. For it were too injurious to its glorious object, to make that but the refuge of a defeated passion, whose transcendency entitles it to more than the most elevated and entire one. Alas, God needs not these beggarly parallels with any fading objects, to become that of our disabused devotion, and he were lovely without comparison, as well as he is so above it. And though I be not so unjust to deny, that there are ladies (some of which I have the happiness not to be unknown to myself).

18 SERAPHIC LOVE.

self) whose excellencies are capable of ennobling their whole sex ; yet their greatest accomplishments, compared to his perfections, whose gifts they are, are in that eclipsing company, as ineonspicuous as the faint qualities of more ordinary persons. As when in a clear morning, the rising-sun vouchsafes to visit us, as well those bright stars that did adorn our hemisphere, as those dark shades that did benight it, vanish : consonantly- whereunto, give me leave to observe to you, Lindamor, that though divers of God's-attributes are, through his goodness, participated by his creatures, yet the scripture makes so vast a disparity betwixt the excellencies that it describes to men, and the same perfections considered as they exist in God, that it seems absolutely to exclude created beings from any title to those attributes ; because they possess them but in a way so inferior to that transcendent, peculiar, and divine manner, in which they belong to God. Thus our Saviour says to him, that (taking him but for a man) called him good, *Why callest thou me good ? there is none good but one, that is, Godⁿ.*

Thus

SERAPHIC LOVE. 19

Thus St. Paul calls God, (or Christ) the only potentate, *μόνος δυνατός*ⁱ, though the earth be shared by several potentates; and even the devout Eunuch in the Acts^k, and the deposed grandees mentioned by the blessed Virgin in her canticle, are, in the original, stiled potentates. Thus, though there be wise virgins as well as foolish^l, and though our Saviour tells us, *That the children of this world are in their generations wiser than the children of light*^m; yet St. Paul scruples not to term his maker, *The only wise God*ⁿ: and thus he elsewhere paraphrases him, *He that hath only immortality*^o, though angels and human souls be deathless. In so incommunicable a manner does the superiority of God's nature make him possess those very excellencies, which the diffusiveness of his goodness makes him pleased to communicate. I am the more zealous, Lindamor, to transfigure your love into devotion, which I must desire you to look upon but as a varied name for seraphic love, because

ⁱ 2 Tim. vi. 15. ^k Acts viii. 27. Luke i. 52. ^l Matt. xxv. 5. ^m Luke xvi. 8. ⁿ 1 Tim. i. 17. ^o 1 Tim. vi. 18.

20 SERAPHIC LOVE.

cause I have observed your passion to have been extremely impatient of confinement, and to have esteemed whatever may be termed limits, to be prisons. Few therefore can need more, or deserve better, an object for their love, for which too immense a vastness were impossible. And such a one is God, whose sovereign perfections render him so incapable of being loved too much, that the most aspiring passion can scarce arrive (so much as) to lessen its disproportion to the object.

Other passions, like other rivers, are most liked, when they calmly flow within their wonted banks, but of seraphic Love, as of Nilus, the very inundations might be desirable, and his overflowings make him the more welcome.

For mortal beauties, our passions are like ourselves: if our stature chance to exceed a certain size or standard, it makes us monstrous; but devotion is like a flawless diamond, where the bigness taxes the value, and the unusual bulk both rates and inhances the lustre and the price. To give God all our love is the greatest command both of the law and gospel,

(in

(in its capacious and teeming womb) both comprising and cherishing all the other services God requires, and that there is not more exacted of us, is not, that an addition were culpable, but because it is impossible. So noble is the nature of devotion, that it admits of failings but by one of the extremes, which is that of defect. For mediocrity, (whose office it is to restrain us from approaching the utmost limits) which in other passions is an excellence, is here an imperfection. Or at least, if mediocrity be that which creates passions virtues, the mediocrity of this love must consist in the boundlessness of it, since that is it which makes it most a virtue. The man after God's own heart ^p, is not afraid to own, even to his maker, an ardency of love for him, which must be expressed by the significant metaphor of thirst; and that such a thirst too, as makes the panting hart (by naturalists observed to be a very dry creature ^q) bray (as I remember the Hebrew hath it) for those refreshing streams, whose want distresses and reduces her to an almost gasping condition:

^p Psal. xlii. 1.
^{Ec.} Sennert. *Inst. de alimentor. facultatibus*, lib. 4.
 part 1. cap. 3.

^q *Cervina caro sicca est,*

22 SERAPHIC LOVE.

condition: *My very Soul*, (saith he) *thirsteth for God*^r. And we know, that thirst is not only so violent an appetite, that it lessens the wonder of that monarch's bargain, whom history records to have parted with his kingdom for a cup of water; but thirst doth so confine our longings to what it craves, that nothing else can satisfy them. The wealth of both the Indies would not excuse the want of a needed cup, supposing their possessor tormented with an appetite, which cannot be quenched but by drink. To which I must add, that the uneasiness of unrelieved thirst, is not like that of other inconveniencies, lessened by continuance, but grows by lasting the more unsupportable. The same inspired poet scruples not also to profess so sensible and so active a concern for God's interests, that *the zeal of God's house had eaten him up*; and hugely troubled he is, that others are not affected with the same zeal. *I beheld*, (says he) *the transgressors, and was grieved, because they kept not thy word*^s. Nay, *rivers of waters*^t, says he, *run down mine eyes*,

^s Psal. xlii. 2.
v. 136.

^s Psal. cxix. 15.

^t Ibidem

SERAPHIC LOVE. 23

yes, because they kept not thy law; and to manifest how much the tenderness and unreservedness of his love, made him think those his friends or enemies, that were so to God; Mine eyes, says he, shall be upon the faithful of the land^u, that they may dwell with me: He that walketh perfect in the way, he shall serve me. Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee, and am not I grieved with those, that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred, I count them mine enemies^x. At this rate did pious David love his maker; but he was so far from thinking this rate excessive, that, transported by the sense of his personal disability to pay that divine object all the love that his perfections merited, he is not content to rouse up all his own faculties to praise God, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name^y, but he invites all the godly to assist him in the payment of so vast a debt; Love the Lord, all ye saints, for, &c. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye nations, praise him all ye people^z. And not content

^u Psal. ci. 6. ^x Psal. cxxxix. 21, 22. ^y Psal. ciii. 1. ^z Psal. cxvii. 1.

24. SERAPHIC LOVE.

content neither frequently to do this, as may appear by very many passages of his sacred poems, he extends his invitation to the angels, and all the other hosts of God, and concludes the book of Psalms with a *Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Hallelujah!*

SECT. IV. Nor does it invalidate what has been delivered, that some men have, even by devout persons, been blamed for too much devotion; for it was not an excess of love, but a want of discretion, that was guilty of their faults; the expression of our love to God ought to be regulated, not by our blind and wild fancies, but by his revealed will, (as Christ says, *If you love me, keep my commandments*) and therefore it is very possible to be too devout, not because any expression of seraphic love can be made with too much ardency, whilst it is considered abstractedly in itself, and irrelatively to the rest; but because that there being several duties of love, which require an ardency of it, it is injurious to exercise all that in one alone, or a few, that belongs equally to the neglected others. We must not (as too many professors are now wont to do, of whose error you may receive a fuller account in some other papers)

dash

dash in pieces the two tables of the law against one another; but must so love God with all our hearts, as to love our neighbour as ourselves. You know what our Saviour saith to the Pharisees, that tithed mint and cummin, with a neglect of judgment, mercy, and faith, those weightier matters of the law; *These ought you (^{to}) to have done, and not to leave the other undone*^a. And indeed this partiality, Lindamor, which makes us display so much of the strength and vigour of our spirits in some favourite duties, that we can but languidly and perfunctorily perform those others we are less fond of, begets in devotion a disease not unlike that new one in children we call the rickets, which some learned physicians do not improbably conceive to arise from the unequal nutrition of the parts. For though none of them receive excessive nourishment, yet some of them receiving as much as is convenient for them, and thereby growing up to their natural bigness, whilst others are less nourished than (were the body healthful) they would be, do grow so little, that the sounder

C

parts

^a Matt. xxiii. 23.

26 SERAPHIC LOVE.

parts seem over-grown, and so the disproportion betwixt them and the ricketing ones, makes the whole body they compose misshapen and unweildy. But, Lindamor, this proves not that we can love God too much, but only that we may imploy too much of that love, in this or that way of expressing it. Whilst we are (as Job speaks) *Inhabitants of these houses of clay* ^b, there are many duties, which do as well challenge an intensity of our affections, as those which relate more immediately to God. As St. Paul tells us ^c, that there is difference betwixt married and single persons, the affections of the one being at liberty to devote themselves more undistractedly to God; whereas those of the other are distracted, (as Adam's were, betwixt his maker and his rib.) But where a direct and immediate expression of love to God defrauds not any other duty, there it is free from the danger of excess. Though prayers may easily be too long, and fasts grow exorbitant; yet Christ could spend the whole night in prayer, and fast forty days, without immoderateness, when the other expressions of his love to his father, and the o-
ther

^b Job iv. 19.

^c 1 Cor. vii. 32, 33, 34.

ther exercises of his mediatory function, were not thereby disturbed, but furthered and promoted. And so Elijah might inculpably fast long^d, when that fasting did not disable him to prosecute his journey to the mount of God; and though just men here on earth must express their love to their master by (that busy, distracting, and remoter way of service) trading with his talent trusted to them; yet when their divesture of mortality dispenses them for those laborious and avocating duties to distressed christians, and their own secular relations, which are here requisite to be performed; their glorified spirits may now, without any immoderate devotion, employ, I say not, their time, but their eternity itself in conversing with God, and following the Lamb whithersoever he goes. And congruously I observe, that the four mysterious beasts, allowed to approach nearest to the throne of God; though their many wings, and more numerous eyes, intimate them of a very active nature, are represented to us in the Apocalypse, as addicted but to one employment, ceasing neither day nor

C 2

night

^d 1 Kings xix. 2.^e Rev. iv. 6, 7.

28 SERAPHIC LOVE.

night from saying, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty; and from giving glory, and honour, and thanks unto him*¹. And of *those that have whited their robes in the blood of the Lamb*, this account is in the same book given us, *That they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple*². So true is it, that no degree of seraphic love can be excessive, nay, not any expression of it immoderate, unless it be made so, not by its greatness, but by its usurpation, whereby it either ingrosses or invades what belongs to its injured and languishing associates. Our love unto the creatures is a present, but unto God it is a tribute; and though we may easily play the prodigals in parting (over freely) with our gifts, we can scarce be so in the payment of our debts; for, be the sums never so vast we pay away, their being due, in spite of their being great, makes the disbursement too much an act of justice to be one of profuseness. Seraphic love, (whose passionateness is its best complexion) has then most approached its noblest measure, when it can least be measured; nor ought its extent to admit of any other limits than an utter

¹ Verse 8. ² Rev. vii. 14, 15.

utter disability to exceed those that terminate it. For he alone loves God as much as he ought, that loving him as much as he can, strives to repair the deplored imperfection of that love, with an extream regret to find his love no greater. Such a sublimity of love will best intitle you to the consolation accruing from that memorable passage of St. John, where he says, *That God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him*^h; which supplies me with a forcible inducement, to invite you to an eager aspiring to a transcendancy in devotion, since it may render self-denial so easy, that it will (at last) almost divest that name. For, this sublimer love being, by an intimate conjunction with its object, wholly devoted to it, and thoroughly refined from all base dross of selfishness and interest, nobly begets a most strict union of our wills with God's, (or rather) a perfect submission of the one to the other. And thus, when it is become your will to obey his, no dispensations of providence will immoderately disquiet you; for, you possess your wishes in general, and in bulk, tho' possibly not always in retail. For your chiefest

C 3

desire

30 SERAPHIC LOVE.

desire being to see your maker's will fulfill'd, your knowledge of his being the sovereign and uncontrolled disposer of the events, assures you, that all accidents that can befall you, are but exact accomplishments of his will, and consequently of yours, so far forth as that is included and comprised in his. When you have resigned, or rather consigned, your expropriated will, (if I may so call it) to God, and thereby (as it were) entrusted him to will for you; all his disposals of, and his dispensations towards you, are, in effect, the acts of your own will, with the advantage of their being directed and specified by him: an advantage that does at once assure you both of their rectitude and success. God's wisdom, power, and love to you considered, how much more happy must you be in your opinions of his chusing for you, than your immediate own? The patient thinks himself obliged to gratify his physician for chusing for him what sorts of meat he is to feed on; though the doctor be wont to make such a choice for him, as deprives him of the dishes he best likes, and oftentimes confines him to those he loathes. Alas, how often might God say of our requests, as Christ did of those of the two aspiring disciples, *Ye know*

not

not what ye ask? I admire, and blush to read
in an heathen satyrift so heavenly a lesson, as,

*Permites ipsis expendere numinibus, quid
Conveniat nobis, rebusque fit utile nostris :
Nam pro jucundis utilia quæque dabunt di,
Charior est illis homo, quam sibi : nos animorum
Impulsu, & cæca pravaque cupidine ducti,
Conjugium petimus partumque uxoris ; at illis
Natum, qui pueri, qualisque futura sit uxor.*

“ Unto the wiser gods the care permit,
“ Of what’s for us and our affairs most fit.
“ They will for pleasant things the best confer;
“ To whom man is, than to himself, more dear.
“ We, by our blinder passions led astray,
“ Do for a wife perhaps or children pray ;
“ Which they may chance refuse us out of love,
“ Knowing both what the wife and boys would
 prove.

The consideration of which made a heathen
philosopher say, That he was wont only in
general terms to beg good things of the gods,
leaving it to them to determine what things
were good for him. And indeed our own
wishes are but too commonly as blind as
Rachael’s, who having so eagerly longed for

32 SERAPHIC LOVE.

children, that she impatiently cries, *Give me children, or else I die*ⁱ, died in child-bearing; and as destructive to the wishers, as their longings proved to the murmuring Israelites, who loathing the wholesome manna (that *bread of angels*^k) God had provided for them, are their own bane in the flesh they had so greedily lusted for. Thus, Lindamor, that so affrighting virtue of self-denial proves to be little more than a son's letter of attorney to his father, of whose paternal kindness and consummate abilities in the management of affairs, his confidence amounts unto a certainty. Nay, till my second thoughts checked the over-forward impetuosity of my first, I was about to add, since God resents an infinite satisfaction in the accomplishment of his own will, your making over your whole will to God, will impart to you that felicity, proportioned to the degree of the resignation. And, as the eye, whilst by the optic nerve tied unto the head, so changed, can taste delights, which it is dead to, being once severed from it, though (otherwise) it enjoy the best condition of which its inanimate nature can be

ⁱ Gen xxxv. 8.

^k Numb. xi. 33.

be supposed to be capable ; so may your will, by an identity or sameness (in tendency, though not in nature) with your Maker's, as it were engrafted into God's, receive a new and an enlarged capacity, which will enable you to contain and relish joys, highly transcending those, which the fullest fruition of your private wishes were able to create. Thus self-denial is a kind of holy association with God, and (by making you his partner) interests you in all his happiness, and acquisitions. And consonantly we see that glorified saints and blessed angels, whose will have the most exquisite and exact conformity to God's, enjoy a happiness most approaching his ; whereas the apostate spirits, in a confirmed repugnancy to his will, find the extremity of wretchedness.

SECT. V. But though I dare not own, Lindamor, so bold a folly, yet I dare without scruple improve the discourse that preceded it, to make out to you an advantageous difference of seraphic love from ordinary flames. For, he that makes a present of his heart to any mortal beauty, even by her welcoming it, and lodging it with her own, grows subject to have it wounded in her breast. Those misfortunes

34 SERAPHIC LOVE.

reach him that would otherwise terminate in her : her afflictions torment him, whilst his own relieve him ; and the felicity of two persons grows requisite to make one happy. The letting out our love to mutable objects, doth but enlarge our hearts, and make them the wider marks for fortune, and capable of being wounded in more places : for, although love may as well make us participate the joys, as resent the infelicities of the parties loved ; yet even the least unhappy persons do in so fickle and so tempestuous a sea, as we all find this world, meet with so many more either cross winds, or stormy gusts, than prosperous gales ; and we are so much more sensible of pain than pleasure, (an aching corn, though less than a sickness, unfitting us to relish the otherwise perfect health of the whole body) that even friendship itself, though a much calmer affection than love, ought to be declined as injurious to our quiet, did we consider it but as a partnership of fortunes, not an exercise of virtues. But he, whose wiser love settles itself on God, is not only by the immutable and even essential happiness of that adorable object, secured from participated infelicities ; but finds his personal crosses and distresses sweetened by considering, that

that what he most loves is most happy, and as able as willing in due time to make him so. And though seraphic love make us partake but God's felicities, yet his acceptance of it makes him resent our sorrows. *In all their afflictions he was afflicted*¹, says the prophet of God, and of the Israelites. And so the son of God, (who is so much one with those that love him, that both he as the head, and they as the members, are sometimes, as making up one body, called by one name, Christ^m) though as high as heaven, above the reach of personal or immediate persecutions, called out to Saul for an intention of harming those that loved him, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* And, to demonstrate the tenderness of this compassion, the prophet says to the returned Israelites, concerning God, *He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye*ⁿ. Nor is God's compassion like a mistress's, a grieving only, and an useless pity, whereby the suffering lover is oftentimes less comforted, as it proceeds from her kindness, than afflicted, because it breeds her disquiet; but God's is a compassion, though

C 6

active,

¹Isai. lxiii. 3. ^m 1 Cor. xii. 12. ⁿ Zach. ii. 8.

36 SERAPHIC LOVE.

active, yet serene, and worthy of himself, which, without producing the discomposure, produces the effects of the most sensibly pity, by engaging him to a timely relief and rescue: as that freshly mentioned expression, *In all their afflictions he was afflicted*, is immediately followed by, *and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love, and in his pity, he redeemed them, and he bare them and carried them all the days of old*. Yes, this pity, for it is not disturbing God's happiness, inclines him not the less to express a sense of our miseries, and makes us find (to use a scripture phrase as I would render it) *Χάρις εἰς ὑμᾶς βοήθειαν*, *Grace for an opportune relief* °; I say, with the divine writer, *an opportune or seasonable relief*; because it comes not always when it is most desired, but when it is most fit; and when that is, he that hath at once all present, past, and future things in his prospect, is fittest to determine. Christ's words to his disciples, *It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power* †, are applicable to more cases than that which occasioned

° Heb. iv. 16.

† Act. i. 7.

sioned them. The Canaanitish woman must put up a refusal, and the reproachful name of a dog^a, (which yet, by the way, was parahprase common enough used by the Jews of the heathen, and as such was understood by this ΕΛΛΗΝΕΣ *Gentile not Greek* ¹.) The Israelites (comprising the patriarchs their progenitors) were reduced to wait four hundred and thirty years, ere they were introduced into the promised land; and during a great part of that long space of time, languished and groaned under the heavy burthens², and other as heavy pressures, of the as cruelly as unsuccessfully politic Egyptians³. St. Paul himself prayed the Lord thrice for the removal of that rude σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, *thorn to the flesh*⁴, (whatever that may mean.) Nay, of the blessed virgin-mother herself, her divine son would not be found till the third day⁵, though she sought him sorrowing. And Lazarus, to whom, even during his sickness, he vouchsafed (a title, to which all Cæsar's were but trifles)

^a Mat. vii. 27. ¹ The Text refers her extraction to Syrophænicia, the same region with Canaan. ² Gal. iii. 17. ³ Ezek. xxviii. 24. ⁴ 2 Cor. xii. 7. ⁵ Luke ii. 48.

38 SERAPHIC LOVE.

trifles) the style of friend ^z, (which embolden-
ed the pious Mary to paraphrase him by a *he*
whom thou lovest ^y) was permitted not only to
lie a dying, but to die; his rescue being
deferred, till it was thought impossible; and
was so indeed to any less power than omni-
potence. Which manifests, that as no degree of
distress is unrelievable by his power, so no ex-
tremity of it is inconsistent with his compassion,
no, not with his friendship. He whose spi-
rit inspired the prophets, is in the last of them
represented under the notion of a refiner ^z: and
it is not the custom of refiners to snatch the
beloved metal out of the fire, as soon as it feels
the violence of that purifying element, nay,
nor as soon as it is melted by it, but they let
it long endure the brunt of the active flames,
actuated by exciting blasts, till it have stood its
due time in the fire, and there obtained its full
purity and splendor. And I hope, you will give
one that converses with furnaces, though he
be no pretender to the philosopher's stone, leave
to improve a chymical metaphor, and observe,
that, though in afflictions, especially national

or

^z John xi. 2.

^y vers. iii.

^z Mal. iii. 3.

or public calamities, God oftentimes seems to make no distinction betwixt the objects of his compassion, and those of his fury, indiscriminately involving them in the same destiny; yet his prescience and intentions make a vast difference, where his inflictions do not seem to make any: as, when on the same test, and with the self-same fire, we urge as well the gold, as the blended lead, or antimony; but with fore-knowing and designing such a disparity in the events, as to consume the ignobler minerals, or blow them off into dross or fumes, and make the gold more pure and full of lustre.

SECT. VI. It is true, Lindamor, and (not to be suspected of partiality towards a love which so little needs it, to be thought fit to be preferred before all other passions) I shall acknowledge it, that the happiness resulting from those many prerogatives, I have endeavoured to discover to you in a transcendent degree of seraphic love, is moderated by (the effects of that sublimity) the eager desires it creates of a more compleat fruition, of its perfect and divine object. Such aspiring sallies of the longing soul made the languishing spouse in the Canticles cry out, *Stay me with flaggons, comfort*

fert me with apples, for I am sick of love^b. Such made the ravished apostle desire to return (for so I should rather translate the word *αναλυσαι*, there^c, and so I find it elsewhere to signify) *and to be with Christ*^d: and the inspired poet thus expresses his longings to the blessed object of them, *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God*^e? But, Lindamor, it was fit, that to elevate our thoughts and wishes to heaven, some peculiar, and else-where incommunicable degree of joy, should be reserved for us there. And it is a good sign, and such as worldly objects cannot boast, when the incompleatness of our seraphic lover's happiness in his fruitions, proceeds not from their want of satisfactoriness, but his want of an entire possession of them. And let me tell you, Lindamor, that even this uneasy state of separation, is sweetned with as much allay as is consistent with its being a grief. For, the divine evidence and teacher of God's love, pronouncing a thirst after perfection

^b Cant. ii. 5. ^c Phil. i. 23. ^d Luk. xii. 36.
^e Psal. xli. 1, 2.

SERAPHIC LOVE. 41

on to be a title to it, (according to those scriptures, *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be satisfied* ^c; and, *let him that is a thirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely* ^e) and the joys of heaven being so vast, that they diffuse their nature to all the grounded hopes men have to obtain them; each new assurance is a new degree of them, and is acceptable to our hope, though uneasy to our desires. And these baitings at compleat felicity should not be more unwelcome for the present disquiet they suppose, than the contrary for the zeal they argue, and the felicity they promise. For this production of the spirit in our hearts, may be justly termed, as the spirit himself in scripture is, *an earnest* ^h; which, though by being such, it confesses itself not to be the entire sum, yet it is not only a part of it, but a pledge: and, Lindamor, how supportable is this thus qualified allay of the joys of seraphic love, in comparison of the disquiets and the torments that are wont to attend sensual love? I shall not lose time to enumerate how many

^c Mat. v. 6

^e Rev. xxii. 17.

^h 2 Cor. v. 5.

42 SERAPHIC LOVE.

many it is supposed to have sent to their graves ; because, though I find those tragical stories rise enough in romances, yet I find them rarities every where but in those fabulous composures : and though I have had the curiosity to visit some of those warmer regions, where the flames of love are thought to burn with more violence, yet (bating the duels and the pox) I remember not to have observed love to have ever been the death of any man : unless, speaking like philosophers, who make reason the essential constituent form of a man, we will affirm, that love, by dethroning reason, though it leave the lover alive, doth kill the man. But, though I am loath to put so bad a compliment upon mankind, as to say, that love is wont to destroy men's lives ; yet I think it would be no calumny to say, it much disquiets them. I could ask you, how long many a lover must continue a servant to purchase the honour of being taken notice of to be so ? and I could recruit that question with pretty store of others of the like nature, but that I suppose your memory will save my pen the labour of representing to you the torments of love, which they that feel them, would little less justly than they do frequently style martyrdoms, if the
great-

greatness only, without the cause and object of men's sufferings, sufficed to make them martyrs. And though the condition of lovers be in romances so dexterously and delightfully described, that not only sanguine readers are transported, but even I myself have been surprised into inclinations, to admire and envy their felicity; yet when some, I was concerned for, have been really concerned and engaged in some adventures, my envy quickly turned into pity. For, the repulses, the regrets, the jealousies, the fears, the absences, the despairs, and the rest of the afflicting disquiets of lovers; though in well-writ romances they are soon read over by the diverted peruser, yet they are not so soon weathered out, nor so easily supported by the disconsolate lover, whose infelicities, though they may be perhaps so handsomely deplored, as to delight the reader, yet trust me, Lindamor, it is a much happier condition to be free from misfortunes, than to be able to complain eloquently of them. And as I have with delight beheld a storm excellently drawn by some rare artist's pencil; but when I was this spring tost by the rude winds that blew me out of Holland, I found a real storm a very troublesome and uneasy thing;

44 SERAPHIC LOVE.

thing; so the condition of a lover, though, drawn by a smooth pen, is wont strangely to affect and please us; yet when men are really engaged in it, they find it full of hardships and disquiet. It is a much better condition to be looked on, than embraced; and experience gives men of it much (sadder and) more unwelcome notions than description did. Nor fancy, Lindamor, that the troublesomeness of your sufferings in love proceeded but from their not being acceptable to her for whom you endured them; for, had your mistress crowned them with myrtle, and proved as kind to you as hymen could have made her, yet, I fear, she could have recompenced you but by disabusing you, and could not have freed you from the need of happiness, but only from a mistake concerning it. For, me-thinks, Lindamor, most of these transitory goods, that we are so fond of, may not unfitly be resembled to the sensitive plant, which you have admired at Sion garden; for as, though we gaze on it with attention and wonder, yet when we come to touch it, the coy delusive plant immediately shrinks in its displayed leaves, and contracts itself into a form and dimensions, disadvantageously differing from the former; which it
again

again recovers by degrees, when touched no more, so these objects, that charm us at a distance, and whilst gazed on with the eyes of expectation and desire; when a more immediate possession hath put them into our hands, their former lustre vanishes, and they appear quite differing things from what before they seemed; though after deprivation or absence hath made us forget their emptiness, and we be reduced to look upon them again at a distance, they recover in most men's eyes their former beauty, and are as capable as before to inveigle and delude us. I must add, Lindamor, that when I compare to the sensitive plant most of these transitory things, that are flattered with the title of goods, I do not out of that number except most mistresses. For, though I am no such enemy to matrimony, as some (for want of understanding the raillery I have sometimes used in ordinary discourse) are pleased to think me, and would not refuse you my advice (though I would not so readily give you my example) to turn votary to hymen; yet I have observed so few happy matches, and so many unfortunate ones; and have so rarely seen men love their wives at the rate they did, whilst they were their mistresses; that I wonder not
that

46 SERAPHIC LOVE.

that legislators, thought it necessary to make marriages indissoluble, to make them lasting. And I cannot fitlier compare marriage than to a lottery ; for in both, he that ventures may succeed, and may miss, and if he draw a prize, he hath a rich return of his venture : but in both lotteries there lies pretty store of blanks for every prize. And for your particular, Lindamor, the world is much mistaken in both your humours, if Hermione's and yours be not so unsuitable, that (to make haste from so nice a subject) had she justified your expectation of her kindness, you would have possessed the person, without possessing the happiness you expected ; and might have found yourself as sensibly disappointed by her grant, as you were by her change.

But I forget, Lindamor, that I resolved not to insist on parallels, and therefore, instead of prosecuting the discourse my pen has slipped into, concerning the advantages of seraphic, compared with ordinary love ; I shall venture to encourage you to the former, by shewing you, that your past addictedness to the latter, may prove serviceable to you in it. Yes, Lindamor, I shall not scruple to tell you, that your strong
passion

passion for Hermione may not a little facilitate your devotion, partly by breaking all the chains, excepting one, that fastened your affection to unsatisfying objects, and restrained it from soaring to the sublimest; and partly, by exalting your passion to a height fit for seraphic flames. For love hath this of noble that it makes us divest ourselves of selfishness, slight fortune, quiet, safety, honour, life, and all our own concerns, when their coming into competition with the loved parties interests, may render their sacrifice acceptable to her; and makes us think goods or ills deserve those names, but as they come to us from or through her. You could scarce have learned a better lesson, even from a much better master; for love having thus accustomed you to (what is thought most difficult in that virtue) the acts of self-denial, you need almost but transfer your flames from an inferior and mistaken, to their true and noblest object, and you will have exalted and refined your love into devotion; to the latter of which, a sublime elevation of the first is such a disposition, as the having formerly by looser airs and (perchance) wanton songs, learned to improve and to command one's voice, is, to the skill of singing those devout hymns and
 hea-

48 SERAPHIC LOVE.

heavenly anthems, in which the church militant seems ambitious to emulate the triumphant, and eccho back the solemn praises and hallelujahs of the celestial choir. And, as by hunting, though (possibly) we follow but some fugative hare, or some such trifling game, we gain that vigor, that sufferance, and agility, that fits us for the toils and military handships that are exacted in the pursuit of glory, and of empire; so though in love (devotion's prenticeship) the courted creature be often considerable enough, to make our elections fit to be numbred among such as those that made love be painted blind; yet in the progress and conduct of our passion, we contract such disinterested and resigned habitudes, as, being preferred to serve celestial objects, do excellently qualify us for devotion. And, in effect, a fervent love seems little else, than devotion mis-addressed, where our own very expressions may serve to disabuse us; for, when you give your mistress the stile of goddess, and talk of nothing to her, but offering up of hearts, adoring, sacrifices, martyrdoms; does not all this imply, that though it be said to her, it is meant to a divinity; which is so much the true and genuine object of men's love, that we cannot

not exalt that passion for any other, without investing it with the notion and attributes of God? As children disclose the inbred kindness they have for those persons, by calling the babies they most doat upon by their dear mother's, or loved nurse's names; and, as Aaron¹, and the revolting Jews, by justifying to themselves their adoration of the idols they had set up by attributing the title of God to what they adored, did tacitly acknowledge adoration to be due only to the deity; so does a lover, by naming what he worships a divinity, tacitly confess the deity to be the proper object of that highest and peculiar strain of worship.

SECT. VIII. And this truth, Lindamor, the very fickleness of lovers concurs to testify: for, what men call, and think inconstancy, is nothing but a chase of perfect beauties, which our love fruitlessly follows and seeks in several objects, because he finds it not entire in any one; for, creatures have but small and obscure fragments of it, which cannot fix, nor satisfy an appetite, born for, and (though unwillingly) aspiring unto God, who is proclaimed the true and proper

¹Exod. xxxii. vers. 4, 5. in the latter of which it is expressly said that the feast was proclaimed ליהוה to Jehovah, the peculiar name of the true God.

per object of our love, as well by men's fickleness to women, as the angels' constancy to him; just as the trembling restlessness of the needle in any but the north point of the compass proceeds from, and manifests its inclination to the pole; its passion for which, both its wavering and its rest bear equal witness to. That unsatisfiedness with transitory fruitions, that men deplore as the unhappiness of their nature, is indeed the privilege of it; as it is the prerogative of men not to care for, or be capable of, being pleased with whistles, hobby-horses, and such fond toys as children doat upon; and make the sole objects of their desires and joys. And by this you may, Lindamor, in some degree imagine the unimaginable suavity, that the fixing of one's love on God is able to bless the soul with; since, by so indulgent a father, and competent a judge as God himself, the decreed uncontingentness of all other goods, is thought richly repaired by its being but an aptness to prove a rise to our love's settling there.

SECT. IX. And hitherto, my dearest Lindamor, I have endeavoured to recommend unto you seraphic love, by mentioning some of its properties, which seem to relate more to the

the love itself, than to the divine object of it. But I fear you will think, I have too long entertained you with considerations, which besides that they are not altogether the importantest that belong to this discourse, I have been by haste reduced to pen in the unaccurate order, wherein they offered themselves to my thoughts, not the method wherein I should have presented them to yours.

SECT. X. And therefore, Lindamor, since the noblest and supreme motives to the love of God consist in his own infinite perfections and prerogatives ; and since the properties of God's love to us do advantage us much more, (and consequently are likelier to endear devotion to us) than those of ours to him ; the former not only moving God to kindle in us, but to cherish and foment, and (if our own wilful extinction interpose not) to crown the latter : for both these reasons, I say, Lindamor, I doubt not but you will think it seasonable for me to proceed to consider that higher sort of motives to devotion, and to evince, that the several things which are wont most to engage and heighten our affections, do, in a peculiar and transcendent manner, shine forth and

52 SERAPHIC LOVE.

constellate in God. That, you know, which enamoured you of Hermione, I need not prove to you, to have been your supposing her full of loveliness and excellencies in herself; and your believing, that the love she vouchsafed you was great, free, constant, or advantageous to you; and that all these properties do not only eminently exist, but illustriously concur in God, and his love, I must now, Lindamor, (with strong desires of doing it profperously) attempt to manifest.

SECT. XI. First, then, our highest love is made God's due by the excellency and prerogative of his nature. But, trust me, Lindamor, when (necessitated by a method exacted by the nature of this discourse) I find myself engaged to say something by way of celebration of God's perfections; I am very sensible, I can but detract from what I desire to praise, and must inevitably appear unable to speak worthily of a theme, to which, even seraphims themselves cannot do right. And if, as the scriptures assure us, those things never fell under the senses, nor entered the thoughts of men^k, which God
has

^k 1. Cor. ii. 9.

has reserved for those that love him; how ineffable and incomprehensible must those things be which he has reserved for himself? the infinite superiority of his nature above all created beings, placing a vast disparity betwixt his greatest communicated vouchsafements, and his boundless, and therefore, to creatures, incommunicable perfections.

Wonder not therefore, Lindamor, that my weak eyes dare not dwell long upon an object, which they cannot stedfastly gaze on long without being dazzled; and do not marvel, that I scruple not to use seeming hyperboles in the mention of perfections, which make the highest hyperboles but seeming ones; both God's nature and his word declaring him to be *exalted above all blessing and praise*¹. If it were seasonable, Lindamor, to entertain ourselves but with those attributes of God, which are legible or conspicuous in the creation; we might there discern the admirable traces of such immense power, such unsearchable wisdom, and such exuberant goodness, as may justly ravish us to an amaze-

D 3

ment

¹ Neh. ix 5.

54 SERAPHIC LOVE.

ment at them, rather than a bare admiration of them. And I must needs acknowledge, Lindamor, that when with bold telescopes I survey the old and newly discovered stars and planets that adorn the upper region of the world; and when with excellent microscopes I discern in otherwise invisible objects, the unimitable subtilty of nature's curious workmanship; and when, in a word, by the help of anatomical knives, and the light of chymical furnaces, I study the book of nature, and consult the glosses of Aristotle, Epicurus, Paracellus, Harvey, Helmont, and other learned expofitors of that instructive volume; I find myself oftentimes reduced to exclaim with the Psalmist, *How manifold are thy works, O Lord? in wisdom hast thou made them all^m!* And when I have been losing myself in admiration of what I understand not, but enough to admire, and not to comprehend; I am often obliged to interrupt, or break off my enquiries, by applying to the works of God's creation the expression used by St. Paul of those of his providence, *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways untraceableⁿ!* and exclamations
of

^m Psal. civ. 24.

ⁿ Rom. xi. 33.

of this nature may the attentive consideration of any other of God's attributes deservedly produce. But having elsewhere treated of this subject in a peculiar discourse, I shall now, Lindamor, invite you to consider with me, how much you, and those that are conscious to their having virtue enough in themselves, to make them prize it in others, are in love with Cato, Scipio, and those other heroes, that did ennoble, and almost exceed mankind, upon the bare knowledge of their virtues; although from them we derive no personal advantage, (their death having numerous ages preceded our nativity.) Since then we pay so much disinterested love to some few faint and ill-refined virtues, that never did profit us; how much on such a score, and at that rate, should we love him, who so possesses all perfections, that each of his perfections is infinite? Were you and I our own creators, Lindamor, and wholly independent upon God, without either need or hope to taste his bounty; his native excellencies, and what he has done for others, should surely ravish us, and enamour us of him. Though his benefits to us did not entitle him to our love, his essence (the source and only motive of those benefits) would give him a right to it; and

36 SERAPHIC LOVE.

though we owed him nought for what we are, we yet should owe him love for what he is. He is that glorious sun, from whom (as beams) all created perfections flow, and in whom they all centre. To omit God's sovereign majesty, (which places him so high, that but to own for him so familiar and levelling an affection as love, much more to expect to be relolved by him, were not the least sawcy presumption man could be guilty of, did not his own commands make it a duty ;) not to insist on this, I say, let us a while consider that proper and peculiar attraction of love, his loveliness; which is such, that, did we but once see it, all creature competitions (even we being judges) would then be as impossible as they are now unjust. In the fifth evangelist's prophetic visions; the seraphims themselves (those glorious ornaments of the celestial hierarchy) are represented as covering their faces in God's presence, either blushing at their comparative deformity, or unable to sustain the unqualified splendor of so divine brightness; whence perhaps it became of old the Jewish fashion (as some

Isai. vi. 2.

SERAPHIC LOVE. 57

Some frequent expressions in their writers intimate) when they went to pray, to veil their heads and faces ; (though now I have in their synagogues seen them only cover their heads, not their faces, with those white garments they wear at their public devotions.) And, Lindamor, if Moses's face, by but a few days converse with God, reflected such a light as dazzled mortal eyes ; and if his swift posts the angels, when sent on errands to us here on earth, even when they may be supposed (if I may so speak) to wear their travelling cloaths, and stood as much to our frailty in the form, as the region they appear to us in, do, in spite of that darkening condescension, so much transcend all objects here on earth, that the scripture often mentions, that even those that aspired to imitate their virtues, were confounded at their presence : and if, in this veiling habit, they appear so glorious, that their thus disadvantaged beauty is made the compliment and hyperbole of that quality ; what may we, or rather, what may we not conclude of God himself, of whom the scripture says, *He that planted the ear shall he not hear ? he*

58 SERAPHIC LOVE.

that formed the eye shall he not see? that is, he that imparts a faculty, or an excellence, to the creature, shall not he himself much more eminently possess it? and, in effect, the most unblemished created beauties are but faint shadows (or trulier, foils) of his. Those drops of prettiness, scatteringly sprinkled amongst the creatures, were designed to defecate and exalt our conceptions, not to inveigle or detain our passions; for, God did never intend them to terminate our love, but only by our eyes to exalt our faith above them, and by the beauties our sight can apprehend, to raise us to a confidence, that there is in their author more than we can either see or comprehend. Like Elijah's fiery chariots¹, though they be pure and bright, and consist of the noblest and gloriouslest materials, they are meant by God but to carry us up to him. And as the patriarch's steward was furnished with so sumptuous an equipage to court Rebecca, not for himself, but for Isaac²; so all the loveliness imparted to the creature is lent it, but to give us some more enlarged conceptions of that vast confluence and immensity

¹ Psal. xciv. 9.
xxiv. 10—53.

² 2 Kings ii. 11,

³ Gen.

mentis that exuberates in God. To make the rightest use of fading beauties, you must consider God and them, as you were wont to do your mistress's picture and its chrystal cover, where, though that native glass were pure and lovely, and very richly edged, yet to gaze on it, was not the chiefest business of your eye; nor did you in it terminate your sight, but greedily look through and beyond it, upon the adored image that solid veil betrayed. Methinks seraphic and our common lovers behold exterior beauties with a difference resembling that wherewith children and astronomers consider Galileo's optic glasses, (with one of which telescopes that I remember I saw at Florence, he merrily boasted that he had *Trovato la corte a Giove*;) which the one prizes most for what they appear; the other, for what they discover. For children contenting themselves to wonder at the length, and fall in love with the workmanship and gildings of the tube, do thus but gaze upon them; whereas astronomers look through them, and, scarce taking notice of the unusual ornaments, or the shape, employ them to find out unknown lights in the sky, and to descry in heaven bright

stars, unseen before, and other celestial novelties and beauties.

SECT. XII. I deny not, Lindamor, that God has been pleased to adorn some of his creatures with hints and impresses, as well of his loveliness as his other excellencies; but they do much more faintly and imperfectly resemble him, than the counterfeit sun we sometimes see in a cloud emulates the true one, by whose refracted and reflected beams, some acute modern naturalists suppose it to be produced. For though this derivative sun shine with a not-inconsiderable lustre, comparatively to the rest of the dark cloud it ennobles, yet is it not only as much inferior to the true sun in brightness as in height; but it enjoys alone a precarious, dependent, and almost momentary being, which often it loses in a very short time, and never attains to preserve a very long one. And, therefore, to neglect that supreme resplendency that shines in God, for those dim representations of it, that we so doat on in the creature, is as preposterous, and absurd, as it were for a Persian to offer his sacrifice to a parhelion, (as the Greeks call that meteor) instead of adoring the sun. And
certainly

certainly, Lindamor, if our dim sight, like that of the prophet's servant, who saw the mountains near Dothan covered with horses and chariots of fire, were priviledged to discern otherwise invisible objects^a; our ravished eyes would behold loveliness enough in God, to make us incessantly exclaim in the language of the prophet, *How great is his goodness, and how great his beauty*[!] Agreeably whereunto we may observe, that as the load-stone doth attract most powerfully the brightest needles, made of the purest steel, and those that most approach it; so angels, who, of all created beings, enjoy the uncloudedest light, and the most clear knowledge of their maker, do love him with a constancy so fixed, that in five thousand and some odd centuries of years, (effluxed since the creation) they could never see any thing, either in God, or out of him, capable to seduce them to a change; God's loveliness (which is such, that the eternal fruition of himself creates even his felicity) is like rare music, which, though it do delight all its partakers, the knowingest artists

still

^a 2 Kings-vi. 17. ^b Zach. ix. 17.

62 SERAPHIC LOVE.

still do highest value, and are most ravished with the transports it produceth, being proportioned to the degrees of the skillfulness of its admirers. The apostate spirits indeed deserted their first station, not frightened thence by any blemish they deseried in God; but probably fell by a sawcy affectation of a parity, and (as divines tell us) a sacrilegious aspiring to perfections, which they were criminally unable to behold, without wishing them their own; and for their present separation from God, it is their curse and punishment. And I shall ingenuously confess to you, Lindamor, that by the advantageous ideas I entertained of God's perfections, I have been sometimes inclined to think, that the reason why God tells Moses, *Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live*², might be, that (as transcendent objects destroy the sense) so lovely and glorious a sight, (whose continuance shall make our happiness in heaven) would let in joys, and would create desires, too mighty for frail mortality to sustain. The ravished soul being shewn such game as that, would
hate

² Exod. xxxiii. 20.

hate so eagerly, that she would break those leashes that tye her to the body, (and thereby hinder her sight to that wished union;) and the glad heart (too narrow a receptacle for so much joy) to make room for such guests, would stretch unto a rupture. Longing or joy have sometimes singly reached degrees that have made them fatal; and why then should their union in such extremes be thought incapable of producing the like effect? Nor is it, perchance, more a privilege of the next life, that we shall then see God, than that we shall survive that glorious sight; which is too dazzling an object for mortal eyes, till (to use St. Paul's expression) *our mortal shall have put on immortality* *. But I must no longer lose myself in a theme, on which it is so easy to speak much, and so impossible to say enough. If I be not very much mistaken, they are so, who presume to give us satisfactory definitions of God's nature, which we may perhaps more safely define by the impossibility of its being accurately defined. And I must confess, I do the least expect the best description of the divine nature, from those that are most forward to take upon them

54 SERAPHIC LOVE.

them to explicate it; for our words being but the representations of our notions, and they being necessarily finite, as our being, few men are (methinks) more likely to be mistaken in the nature of what it infinite, (and consequently of God's attributes) than those that think descriptions can comprise it. Nor will an assiduity and constancy of our speculations herein relieve us; for too fixed a contemplation of God's essence does but the more confound us. As I remember, St. Paul tells the Jews, that he *could not see for the glory of that light* * that shone from heaven about him at his conversion. And this the famous Simonides experimentally found, who being asked what God was, took a day's time to consider of it; after, being called upon for his answer, he desired two days longer to think upon it; and, when they were expired, demanded four days longer; and so continued a great while, each time increasing his demands for respite; till, being pressed to give an account of such a dilatory way of proceeding, he ingenuously acknowledged, that the longer

* Acts xxii. 6, 11.

longer he considered God's nature, the less he comprehended it. And indeed, experience teaches us, that they that gaze steadfastly on the noon-day's sun, can least of all discern what it is, being rather dazzled than instructed by so confounding an object. Nor, is it only, Lindamor, a task of too great difficulty for a meer man, perfectly to explicate that incomprehensible nature of God, to which nothing but his own infinite understanding can be adequate; but, methinks, even to celebrate God's perfections, cannot be soberly attempted, without a very deep sense of a man's own unworthiness and incapacity. For, the same excellencies that furnish us with praises, do transcend them. And the fruitfulness of the subject may as well deter, as invite our pens; since, as we are sure we shall not want them, so we are certain we cannot dignify it. And, for my part, Lindamor, though my subject exacted of me the praises I have endeavoured to ascribe to God, yet I should have thought it requisite rather to decline the laws of method, than be reduced to derogate from what I would extol; if the necessity of detracting from God's perfections were not equal to that

of

of mentioning them; and if that necessity were not as glorious to God, as greater praises than we are able to ascribe him, could be. But, Lindamor, having thus done right to my method, though I could not to my theme, I shall only invite you to imitate with me those Persians, that adored the sun, and thought the light he lent them served but to make the source of it admired, and not to pry into his abstruse essence with it. And though I might say much more concerning God's perfections, I must henceforth think silence the properest language I can now employ; for it is silence that best expresses our wonder: and sure, wonder is never more seasonable than when God is the object; a prostrate veneration being the safest apprehension of him that is incomprehensible.

SECT. XIII. Having thus considered, Lindamor, how fit an object God is of our highest love, for what he is in himself; let us now proceed to derive further proofs of the same truth, from what he is to us, (that your gratitude may contend with your reason, which shall most heighten your devotion) and

we

we shall find in the vastness, freeness, disinterestedness, constancy, and advantageousness of his love to us, that more than all the love we can pay him, were but a little part of that we owe him.

But for the first attribute, we have assigned his love, (the greatness of it) it being a general property, diffused through all the rest, and conspicuous in them, it requires now to be treated of apart.

We shall then proceed to the freeness or unmeritedness of God's love; to believe which strangely vast, we need but consider, that we so little could at first deserve his love, that he loved us even before we had a being; and our felicity in his degrees, preceded our existence in this world. God loved you numerous ages before you were; and his goodness is so entirely its own motive, that even your creation (since when alone you can pretend to merit his love) is the effect of it. This benefit alone were sufficient to render God the object of our love, though we were that of his aversion. For (as the Persians adored the sun even when it scorched

68 SERAPHIC LOVE.

scorched them) we esteem ourselves obliged to love and honour our parents in spite of their being wicked and unkind, though they be but God's instruments in our production, and made us what we were born, not arbitrarily, but in virtue of his ordination. But God, to confer on us, in the most excellent and endearing manner, the blessing promised to his ancient people, when he vouchsafed to assure them, that *he would love them freely*¹, was pleased to love us, not only when we were not at all, but when we were his enemies; *If when we were enemies* (saith St. Paul) *we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, &c.*². Our inexistence indeed was a condition, wherein nothing in us was capable of being a motive of God's love; but our enmity proceeded further, and made us worthy of his detestation; as if his love were nothing unless it vanquished obstacles, as well as wanted motives. This gave the apostle a just cause to say, that *God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us*³, that is, when we wanted all motives to invite his love, unless our very

¹ Hof. xiv. 4.

² Rom. v. 10.

³ Rom. v. 8.

SERAPHIC LOVE. 69

very want of them should pass for one. And how did God express his love unto us? even by the gift of the Son of his love; *for God so loved the world^b, (says the divine token of his love) that he gave his only begotten Son.* And how did that Son love it? *He (says the apostle) being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross^c.* That is, that he would love at no less rate than death; and from the super-eminent height of glory, stooped and abased himself to the sufferance of the extremest of indignities, and sunk himself to the bottom of abjection, to exalt our condition to the contrary extreme. *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed, says the prophet^d.* For ye know the
grace

^b John iii. 16. ^c Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8. ^d Isa. liii. 5.

70 SERAPHIC LOVE.

grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich, says the apostle*. Men having displeased God, and consequently forfeited all right and natural possibility to happiness; even whilst they completed the forlornness of their condition, by the lethargy of not being sensible of it, and were as careless to seek means of recovery, as they had been unable to devise them of themselves; even then, his restless love would never be at quiet, till it had set his omniscience on work, to contrive expedients, and find out a way to reconcile his justice and his mercy, in reconciling sinners to himself. And this merciful design, by the incarnation of his Son, he prosecuted in a way so worthy of himself, and so advantageous to us, that our just wonder at it may keep us from having any, to find that, as St. Peter informs us, the very angels (prompted, questionless, by a religious curiosity) ardently *desire to look into those divine mysteries*†. I find it hotly disputed amongst divines, (not only betwixt the Socinians

* 2 Cor. viii. 9.

† 1 Pet. i. 12.

SERAPHIC LOVE. 71.

Socinians and the orthodox, but betwixt orthodox and orthodox) whether or no God could, without violating his justice, have devised any other course for the expiation of sin, than the passion and death of Christ. But, without venturing to determine, whether or no God could, to redeem us, have chosen any other way, we may safely think, that he has chosen the most obliging and most endearing way; displaying in this divine manner of rescuing us, the severest justice, and the highest mercy; the greatest hatred of sin, and the greatest love to sinners: since by those unequalled and unvaluable sufferings, to which he delivered up for us that Son, who is so near unto him, that he truly said, *I and the father are one*^s, he at once manifested both how much he hated sin, which he so heavily punished in the person he most loved; (though that surety but adopted it, to free men from the insupportable vengeance of it) and how much he loved sinners, by giving up what he so loved, for a ransom of those that were guilty of what he so hated. And therefore our Saviour,

though

^s John x. 30.

72 SERAPHIC LOVE.

though he did such great things to satisfy the unbelieving and contumacious Jews of his being their promised Messiah, would not decline death to convince them; and, though he had not seldom done so much to make himself the object of their faith, would not be invited from the cross, though the chief priests and scribes themselves said at his crucifixion, *Let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him*^b. And Christ, to convince the world of their unableness to emerge and recover out of that deep abyfs, wherein the load of sin (which in scripture is called a weightⁱ) had precipitated fallen man, came not into the world until well nigh 4000 years of sickness had made the disease desperate, and the cure almost hopeless. So inveterate an obstinacy at once widening the distance betwixt God and man, and proclaiming the latter's disability to find, by his own wisdom, expedients of reunion. Thus Christ healed and dispossessed a dumb person, who was able to make entreaties but by the disability of pronouncing them^k; and might truly say to the secure world, *I am found of them*

^b Mat. xxiv. 40.
ix. 32.

ⁱ Heb. xii. 1.

^k Mat.

*them that sought me not*¹. And when our Saviour was come into this wretched world, of all the numerous miracles recorded in the gospel, he scarce did any for his own private relief. And to shew, that as he endured his sorrows for our sakes, that *by his stripes we might be healed*^m; so were the joys he tasted in relation to us. We read not (which is highly observable) in the whole gospel, that ever he rejoiced but once, and that was, when his returned disciples informed him, that they had victoriously *chased devils and diseases out of oppressed mortals*, and that by his *authority* men had been *dispossessed* of both the tempter and punishment of sinⁿ. He conversed among his contemporaries with virtues, as well attesting what he was, as prophecies and miracles could do; and, to teach man how much he valued him above those creatures that man makes his idols, he often altered and suspended the course of nature for man's instruction, or his relief, and reversed the laws established in the universe, to engage men to obey those of God, by doing miracles so numerous and great, that the

E

Jews

¹ Isa. lxx. 1.^m Isa. liii. 5.ⁿ Luk. x.

74 SERAPHIC LOVE.

Jews unbelief may be almost counted one*. Yet were those wonders wrought for a generation that ascribed them to the devil^p, and returned them with so unexemplified an ingratitude, that it is not the least of his wonders, that he would vouchsafe to work any of them for such blasphemous wretches; who were indeed, as some of the later Jews have too truly stiled themselves, in relation to their fathers, *Ghometz ben ya-yin*, vinegar the child of wine, a most degenerate off-spring of holy progenitors. He suffered so much for them, that made him do so, that he suffered the addition of misery of being thought to suffer deservedly; *And he was numbered with the transgressors*^q. And though he lived as much a miracle as any he did, yet did his condition sometimes appear so despicable and forlorn, that men could not know his deity but by his goodness, which was too infinite not to belong incommunicably to God. And though it were once a saying of our Saviour's, *greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*^r; yet is not, what is said of the love here mentioned, to be understood of love indefinitely,
or

* Mat. xii. 24. ^p Mat. iii. 12. ^q Isai. liii. 12.
^r John xv. 13.

or generally considered, but only of the single acts or expressions of a man's love to his friends, compared betwixt themselves; and so the alledged passage seems to mean but this, that among the single acts of kindness to a man's friends, there is not any one more highly expressive of a real and sincere love, than to part with one's life for their sakes. This text therefore would not be indefinitely applied to the affection of love itself, as if it could not possibly be greater than is requisite to make a man content or willing to die for his friends; for he that sacrifices besides his life, his fortune also, his children, and his reputation, does thereby express more love to them, than he could do by parting with his life only for them. And he that is forward to die for those that hate him, or, at least, know him not, discloses a more plentiful and exuberant stock of love, than he that does the same kindness but for those that love him. And thus our Saviour would be understood, unless we would say, that he out-practised what he taught; for, he came to lay down his life even for his enemies, and (like the kind balsam-tree, whose healing wounds weep sovereign balm to cure those that made them) he refused not to die for those

E 2

that

76 SERAPHIC LOVE.

that killed him, and shed his blood for some of those that spilt it. And so little was his injured love to the ungrateful world discouraged or impaired by the savage entertainment he met with in it, that, after he had suffered from wretched men (for whose sakes he left heaven to become capable of suffering) such barbarous indignities, as might have made bare punishments appear mercy, and even cruelty itself seem no more than justice; when, I say, to hope for so much as his pardon were presumption, he was pleased to create confidence of no less than his love, a virtue. Nor think it, Lindamor, impertinent to our present theme, that I insist so much on what Christ has done and suffered for us, since both he himself informs us, that *He and his Father are one*^{*}; and some of the texts already mentioned have taught us, that it was an effect of God's love also to the world, that *He gave his only begotten son to redeem it*[†]; and that *God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us*[‡]. Wherefore I shall
with-

^{*} John x. 30. *see also* John xiv. ver. 9, 10, 11.

[†] John iii. 16.

[‡] Rom. v. 8.

without scruple proceed to observe to you, that so free is Christ's dilection, that the grand condition of our felicity is our belief, that he is disposed to make us happy, on terms not only so honourable to him, but so advantagious to us, that, I was about to say, that possibly faith itself would scarce be exacted as requisite to our happiness, but that the condition does encrease the benefit, by vouchasing us bold and early anticipations of it: for, *Faith* being (as the apostle terms it) *the substance of things hoped for, and evidence (or conviction) of things not seen*^w, wafts our joys to this side of the grave, bows heaven down to us, till our freed spirits can soar up to heaven; and does us such a service, as the Jewish spies did to their country-men, by bringing them over to this side Jordan into the wilderness^x, some of the pleasant and delicious fruits of the blessed land of promise. I said, Lindamor, that faith was the grand condition required in God's free grant of eternal life. Not that I would ascribe any thing to a lazy, speculative, and barren faith, in opposition to that lively and active one,

E 3

which

^w Heb. xi. 1.

^x Numb. xiii. 23, 27

which is called by the apostle, *πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη*, *faith operating by love*^y; since I am informed by St. James, that the divorce of faith and works is as destructive to religion, as that of soul and body is to life^z: but that I was willing to mind you, that though true faith (which cries like Rachel, *give me children or else I die*^a) be ever the pregnant mother of good works, yet are not those works the cause, but the effects and signs of God's first love to men, (however afterward the children may nurse their parents.) As, though the needle's pointing at the poles be, by being an effect, an argument of its having been invigorated by the loadstone, or received influence from some other magnetic body; yet is not that respect unto the north the cause, but the operation of the iron's being drawn by the attractive mineral, *Thou art good, and dost good*, says the Psalmist to his Maker^b. The greatness of his goodness is that which makes it ours; nor doth he do us good, because that we are good, but because he is liberally so; as the sun shines on dunghills, not out of any invitation his beams

^y Gal. v. 6. ^z Jam. ii. 26. ^a Gen. xxx. 1.
^b Psal. cxix. 68.

beams find there, but because it is his nature to be diffusive of his light. Yet with this deference, that whereas the sun's bounty, by being rather an advantage to us than a favour, deserves our joy, and not our thanks, because his visits are made designlessly, and without any particular intention of address, (by such a bare necessity of nature, as that which makes springs flow out into streams, when their beds are too narrow to contain the renewed water that doth incessantly swell the exuberant sources;) God, on the contrary, for being necessarily kind, is not less freely or obligingly so, to you or me; for, though some kind of communicativeness be essential to his goodness, yet his extension of it without himself, and his vouchsafing it to this or that particular person, are purely arbitrary. To omit his love to the numberless elect angels; the strict relations betwixt the persons of the blessed Trinity, supplying God with internal objects, which imployed his kindness before the creation, and himself being able to allow his goodness the extent of infinity for its diffusion. But (having glanced at this only by the bye) we may yet further admiringly observe, that whereas men usually give freeliest where they have not given before, and make it both the motive

80 SERAPHIC LOVE.

and excuse of their desistance from giving any more, that they have given already; God's bounty hath a very different method; for he uses to give, because he hath given, and that he may give. Consonantly to which, when the revolting Israelites had broken the contents, whilst Moses was bringing them the tables of the law, and had thereby provoked the incensed giver of it to the thoughts of a sudden extirpation of so ingrateful and rebellious a people; we may observe, that, whereas God, as unwilling to remember his former goodness to them, speaking to Moses, calls them, *Thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Ægypt*^c: Moses, on the other side, to engage God to the new mercy of a pardon, represents to God his former mercy to them, and calls them God's people, which *He brought forth out of the land of Ægypt, with great power, and with a mighty hand*^d. And so conspicuous in the eternal son was this property of the merciful father, that when sick Lazarus's sisters implored his rescue for their expiring brother, the motive they employed, and which prospered

^c Exod. xxxii 7.

^d Vers. 11.

pered their addressees, was, *Lord, behold*, (not, he who loveth thee, but) *be whom thou lovest, is sick* ^c. And as he takes the first inducements of his bounty from himself, so do his former favours both invite and give rates to his succeeding blessings. And there is reason for it : for his pure love being all the merit, by which man can pretend to the effects of his bounty ; it is but just, that the degree of his love should proportion those favours, which it is our only title to ; and that God's liberality should as well afford measures as motives to itself.

SECT. XIV. Nor is God's love less disinterested than free. His grand design upon us is but to make us instruments and partakers of his glory, and to bring us to everlasting happiness, by a way that does as well elevate and dignify our nature, as the condition reserved for us will. His method of saving us, if but complied with, does here, as the apostle speaks, *Fit us for the inheritance of the saints in light* ^f ; we being made (as St. Peter speaks) *partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust* ^g. So that

E 5

those

^c John xi. 3.

^f Col. i. 12.

^g 2 Pet. i. 4.

those things, wherein the noblest of the philosophers placed their felicity, serve but to qualify and prepare Christians for that higher blessedness that is reserved by God for those that love him; and cannot but be heightened and endeared by the value, which graces and virtues had given men on earth, for such a noble and rational kind of happiness, as is apportioned to them in heaven. What ends can he have upon us, whose goodness and his blessedness are both infinite? He was inconceivably happy (in his own self-sufficiency) before the creatures had a being; and sure that felicity that needed not themselves to be supreme, needs nothing that they can do^b. Nor was it his indigence that forced him to make the world, thereby to make new acquisitions, but his goodness that pressed him to manifest, and to impart his glory, and the goods which he so overflowingly abounds with. Witness his suspension of the world's creation, which certainly had had an earlier date, were the deity capable of

^b ——— *Quid enim immortalibus atque beatis,
Gratia nostra queat largiri emolumentum,
Ut nostrâ quidquam causâ gerere aggredierentur?*
Lucret. ex Epic.

of want, and the creatures of supplying it. St. Paul in his epistle to Timothy, styles God *Μακάριος*, which we translate, the blessed God¹, but may perhaps more properly be rendered, the happy God²: and elsewhere in the same epistles he truly calls him the happy, as well as only potentate. *God* (says the apostle) *that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not, &c. as though he needed any thing, seeing that he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. And, In him, we live, and move, and have our being*³. And indeed so coherent in the mind of a meer man, that does but consider and understand the import of his own notions, is the belief of God's happiness to that of his being; that I remember the Epicurean, Lucretius himself, even in that impious passage, where he denies divine providence; and in a seeming, but injurious compliment, would, under the pretence of easing God of it, deprive him of the government of the world; does yet confess, that the divine nature must

E 6

neces-

¹ 1 Tim. i. 11.
xxvii, 24, 25, 26.

² 1 Tim. vi. 15.

³ Act:

84 SERAPHIC LOVE.

necessarily enjoy a supreme and endless tranquility ; adding, (to bring this to our present purpose) that it is

——— *Privata dolore omni, privata periculis,
Ipsa suis pollens opibus, nihil indiga nostri.*

Whereby he acknowledges,

“ That from all griefs and dangers of them freed,

“ Rich in itself, it has of us no need.

Or, if you will have him speak of the gods in the plural, like a heathen poet, that

“ Far above griefs and dangers, those blest powers,

“ Rich in their native goods, need none of ours.

A much nobler poet tells us, That *the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein*^m. Agreeably whereunto, that great God that formed all things,

^m Psal. xxiv. 1.

thingsⁿ, (as in our translation the scripture calls him) says in one of the Psalms, *If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof*^o. His ubiquity excludes all wishes of remove, by making his essence incapable of exclusion; for, whither should he desire to transport himself that is every where, and can wish himself in no place where he is not already? His sufficiency is such, that he can see no goods, but what he gives or hath, (or rather both bestows and possesses) his plenty being so unexhausted a spring of goods, that his liberality does less impoverish God, than the sun's light does him, or imparted knowledge impairs the teacher's stock. And therefore, though St. James does very justly call God, *The father of lights*^p, who is the bestower of every good and every perfect gift; yet the *Friend of God*, (as the scripture calls Abraham) and that royal priest, (whom the writer to the Hebrews teaches us to have been so illustrious a type of him^q, whom he calls, *The high priest of our Profession*^r) do both of them in the same chapter stile him, *The possessor*
of

ⁿ Prov. xxvi. 10. ^o Psal. l. 12. ^p Jam. i. 17.
^q Heb. vii. *per totum*. ^r Heb. iii. 1.

86 SERAPHIC LOVE.

of heaven and earth *. No, no, God needs not beg from, nor covet in, the creatures shallow streams, those goods, of which he not only hath, but is the source. Our greatest services to our Creator must be to discharge ourselves, not to advantage him, nor as thinking to add any thing to a felicity which were not infinite, could it admit increase. Our highest performances, though they be dues, amount not unto tributes, but are rather like those pepper-corns of rent which free-holders pay, not with hope or with intent to enrich their landlord, but to acknowledge, that they hold all from him. When we admire the sun, our seeing of his light doth not encrease it, it makes it not greater, but only makes it ours; and when we turn away, or shut our eyes, that glorious planet suffers no eclipse, and is not at all darkened or impaired, nor doth he thereby lose his light, but we : The easiness of the application requires, and excuses its omission. *If thou sinnest,* (says Elihu in Job) *what dost thou against him ? if thou be righteous, what givest thou him ? or what receiveth he*

* Gen. xiv. 22.

he of thine hand ? thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man. In effect, the wicked's spite against God is but like a mad-man's running his head against the wall, that leaves the wall unshaken, but dashes his own brains out. God *inhabits* a felicity (as well as *light*) *inaccessible*^u to all inferior attempts : his sovereign tranquillity is so sublimely placed, that it is above the reach of all disquieting impressions ; and, like the stars, that feel not the diseases their inauspicious influence produces, he doth not resent the torments he inflicts. God's justice is not less essential to him than his mercy ; witness that (the numbers of the saints and the reprobate consider'd) thousands fall sacrifices to the severer attribute, for one that proves capable of the milder. He said, *He would get himself honour upon Pharaoh and all his host*, when he designed their ruin in the Red Sea^w : And Moses said, *He hath triumphed gloriously in affecting it*^z. And in Ezekiel he says, *Behold, I am against thee, O Sidon, and I will be glorified in*

^t Job xxxv. 6, 7, 8.

^w Exod. xiv. 17, 18.

^u 1 Tim. vi. 16.

^z Exod. xv. 1.

88 SERAPHIC LOVE.

in the midst of thee, and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall have executed my judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her^y.

Thus when a flash of God's indignation (kindled by that *strange fire* they presumed to offer before him) had blasted the two presumptuous sons of Aaron, God is said *to have been sanctified in them that come nigh him, and to have been glorified before all the people^z*; such eminent and exemplary instances of severity, manifesting him to be so holy in his laws, and so concerned for them, that even the ministers of his altars shall not violate them with impunity, but find him (what the writer to the Hebrews calls him) *A consuming fire^a*; who will be glorified before all his people, either by the obedience of those that approach him, or by their destruction. So to evidence, that God can derive satisfaction as well from the exercise of provoked justice, as from that of his provoked mercy, the sacred orator uses this remarkable *antanaclasis*, *And it shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over*

^y Ezek. xxviii. 22.

^a Heb. xii. 2.

^z Levit. x. 3.

over you to do you good, and multiply you; so will the Lord rejoyce over you to destroy you, and bring you to nought^b. Thus, though it be truly said of God by the prophet Jeremiah, that he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men^c, (and therefore the determined consumption of the whole land, which our bibles english, *God's work, his strange work*^d, other translators read, *Opus alienum suum*) yet when the sins of incorrigible offenders are grown to that provoking heighth, that his mercy intercedes no more to avert or suspend the inflictions of his justice; then how much he can satisfy himself in destroying those that wou'd not be preserved, may be guessed at by that formidable expression in Ezekiel; where, having foretold what havock the sword, the famine, and the pestilence should make amongst the intractable and dispersed Israelites, he adds, (as a kind of *ἔκπρωτος*) *Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted*^e. The howlings of the damned as well sound forth his praises, as do the hallelujahs of the saints; they

^b Deut. xxviii. 63. ^c Lam. iii. 33. ^d Isa. xxviii. 21. ^e Ezek. xiii. 5.

they both do sing to him an everlasting canticle of praise; only in this great consort of his whole intelligent creation, the designlesly conspiring voices are as differing as the conditions of the respective singers. Hell's darkness doth as well contribute to God's glory, as heaven's eternal splendor: as shadows, judiciously placed, do no less praise the painter, than do the livelier and brighter colours. And as when the earth doth send black, noisome, and sulphureous exhalations up-toward the sky, alas, they reach not heaven, nor discompose the spheres; but all the storms and thunders they produce fall on that globe they came from, and there do all their mischief: so, the wicked may wrong God indeed, yet do they really harm but themselves by all their greatest sins, which trouble him chiefly, but because they necessitate him to punish them: for the transgressions that do most provoke God, do him not the least harm. An impious person may (as Elihu lately informed us) hurt a man, as himself is, not that supremely blessed deity; the result of whose infinite perfections is a resembling happiness, which is as inseparable from him as his essence. Our offences may derogate from his accessional glory, not from his

his essential felicity; or rather, the most desperate sinners, by their greatest crimes, can but change the attribute they should bring honour to, and but oppose the glorifying of his goodness to occasion the glorifying of his justice; since he will be infallibly glorified, soon or late, either by mens actions, or their sufferings; by their practice of duties, or punishment for sin. Thus you see how little God is beholding to you for your declining hell: nor will the score be very much encreased by your addresses and attempts for heaven. *Can a man (says Eliphaz) be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain unto him that thou makest thy ways perfect?* Congruously to which sense the Psalmist says, *My goodness extendeth not to thee*^g: the fire that we kindle on God's altars heats and enlightens us, but warms not heaven at so distant a remove, nor is wanted in the sun's residence. We have all the redolence of the perfumes and incense we burn upon his altars, the smoak doth vanish e'er it can

^f Job xxii. 2, 3.

^g Psal. xvi. 2.

can reach the sky, and whilst it is undispersed, but clouds, and but obscures it. Alas, our best performances are as useless services to God, as the heir's bringing wax to his departing father, is to him, which adds not any thing to the rich man's store, and is by him desired and accepted, only to seal away a fortune to his son. Though therefore it be true, that God is pleased with our performances, yet is that welcome he vouchsafes to give them, so far from enabling us by them to requite his love, that it encreases the unrequitedness of it; since he is delighted with them as they afford him just rises to reward them. How far from mercenary then is God's bounty! since he accepts our acknowledgments of his former blessings, (chiefly) to make them opportunities of conferring fresh ones; as good old Isaac desired his son's venison, that from the relishing of that savoury meat he might take an opportunity to bless him ^a.

And the better to discover how disinterested God's favours are, let us further consider, how little

^a Gen. xxvii. 4.

little they are requitable ; for we can give him nothing but his own, (nor, heaven knows, all that neither;) and both the will and power to serve him are his, upon so just and many scores, that we are unable to retribute, unless we do restore ; and all the duties we can pay our maker, are less properly requitals than restitutions. When David and his officers had offered towards the structure of that magnificent temple, which they seemed ambitious to make a mansion inferior to heaven only ; the king himself gave three thousand talents of gold, and seven of refined silver ; and the heads of the people five thousand talents (besides ten thousand drachms) of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand of brass, and a hundred thousand of iron, (a treasure, of which I scarce remember to have read the like in any history) besides a number of all manner of precious stones, capable of impoverishing the very Indies. They perfumed this noble and unequalled offering with a solemn confession, which perhaps in God's esteem was much more precious than it: *Thine, O Lord,* (says the royal prophet in the name of all) *is the greatness, and the power, and the glory,*
and

and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all. And in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers. Our days on earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thy holy name, cometh of thy hand, and is all thy ownⁱ. Who (says the apostle, in a question that imports its own negative) hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things^k. Nay, even our love itself (that poor man's surety and exchequer, that doth pay all his

ⁱ 1 Chron. xxix. 11,—16. ^k Rom. xi. 35, 36.

his debts by supplying him with the prerogative to coin his desires and wishes of an arbitrary value) is here unable to discharge our debts: our love being too much the effect, to be capable of being the recompence of God's. And surely the divine amorists had cause to say, that *herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us*¹. And, as the same apostle elsewhere speaks, *we love him, because he first loved us*^m. If, in effect, we look upon the unworthy contest, betwixt God's mercies, and most mens ingratitude, and but reflect upon the small return of love that the greatest disbursements of his do usually bring home; we cannot but acknowledge, (as David in the lately mentioned scripture did) that our loving God for his favours, is one of the greatest favours that we love him for. So unrequitable is God's love, and so insolvent are we, that that love vastly improves the benefit, by which alone we might have pretended to some ability of retribution. And so unlimited is this impotence of ours to recompence or repay God's dilection, that it extends to, and fetters
our

¹ 1 John iv. 10.

^m 1 John iv. 19.

96 SERAPHIC LOVE.

our very wishes. For God enjoys an affluence of felicity, so perfect and entire, that even our wishes can aim at nothing for him worthy of him, unless instructed by what he already actually possesses, and the sense of this same very impotence, to some of the greatest proficient in seraphic love, appears not the least uneasy property of it. It grieves us sensibly, to see our selves reduced to be only passive, and the receivers in this commerce. We would fain contribute something, and cannot always refrain from devoting our wishes to increase his happiness, to whom we owe all ours. And some holy persons (particularly St. Austin) have by the exuberance of their gratitude and devotion, been transported to make wishes, and use expressions, wherein their affections had a greater share than their reason, and which argued them much better to apprehend, how much God deserved of them, than how little he needed them. But, upon second thoughts, we shall find, that the cause of our grief ought to turn it into our joy, since the desires we would frame, aiming at God's being infinitely happy, are all fulfilled before they are conceived, and that in the most advantageous

gious and noblest way : for, could God's happiness admit accession by our accomplished wishes, there were then a possibility of his wanting something to render it compleat. And sure it is a more supreme felicity to be by nature transcendently above all increase of blessedness, than to receive the greatest that men can wish.

SECT. XV. To proceed now to the constancy of God's love : we cannot entertain of God any apprehensions, not altogether unworthy of him, and criminally injurious to him, without believing, that to think that he can be inconstant, is as a great crime as it were a misery to find him so. His love is like his essence, immutably eternal, reaching from everlasting to everlasting, it preceded the nativity of time, and will survive its utmost period and obsequies. *Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end*, says the Evangelist^a : And when St. James had told us, *That every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh*

F down

^a John xiii. 1.

98 SERAPHIC LOVE.

down from the father of lights °, he adds, (to complete our consolation) with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us of the word of truth °.

And, in effect, since God takes the motives of his love to us, from himself, not from us, the unchangeableness of his nature seems strongly to infer that of his charity, and our happiness in it. For, *I am the Lord, I change not; therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed,* says God by the last of his prophets^p: And in Jeremiah he tells his people, *I have loved them with an everlasting love.* And what God once said to the generous Josuah, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*^q, is, by the writer to the Hebrews, applied to believers in general; for *the gifts and calling of God* (says the same author elsewhere) *are without repentance*^r. Nor do those crosses that seem due to his anger destroy the immutability of his love, since even that anger is an effect of it, proceeding from a fatherly impatience of seeing a spot unwiped off in the face he loves too well to see a blemish in it; and from his
desire

[°] James i. 17. ^p Mal. iii. 6. ^q Josh. i. 5.
^r Heb. xiii. 5. Rom. xi. 29.

desire to see his child an object fit for a larger measure of his kindness: as when we beat the dust out of a suit we fancy, we strike not out of anger, but only to remove that which doth sully it, and hinder us to take that delight in it, which our fondness would be pleased with a just cause to find. *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten,* (says our Saviour *.) And, *I know, O Lord,* (says the Psalmist) *that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me* †. The furnace of affliction being meant but to refine us from our earthly drossiness, and soften us for the impression of God's own stamp and image.

The great and merciful architect of his church, (whom not only the philosophers have styled, but the scripture itself calls *τεχνητης*, an artist or artificer †) employs not on us the hammer and the chissel, with an intent to wound or mangle us, but only to square and fashion our hard and stubborn hearts into such *living stones* †, as may both grace and strengthen his heavenly structure. Nor is God only thus constant to

F 2

his

* Rev. iii. 19.
xi. 10.

† Psal. cxix. 75.
‡ 1 Pet. ii. 5.

‡ Heb.

100 SERAPHIC LOVE.

his love, but to his loveliness. Our female beauties are usually as fickle in their faces as their minds, and more certainly in the former; because, though casualties should spare them, age brings in a necessity of a change, nay, a decay; leaving our doters upon red and white incessantly perplexed, by the uncertainty both of the continuance of their mistress's kindness, and of the lasting of her beauty, (both which are necessary to the amorist's joys and quiet :) for, sometimes, when the mistress's humour doth not change so much, as to prove guilty of the fault of inconstancy, her face alters enough to make her lovers wish inconstancy no fault; or, that she had committed it, that her fickleness might afford them the excuse of imitation or revenge. But, in devotion, we are equally secure from both these dangers. Since God doth not desist from blessing us with his love, nor ceases ever from deserving the height of ours. Nor is he only constant in making us the objects of his love, but also in bending and inclining us to make him the object of our strongest affections; so that he not only persists in continuing to us both the offer and value of his love, but perseveres to give us

a receptive disposition to welcome it to us, and reflect it up to him. The want of such a disposition lost Adam paradise, and the fallen angels heaven; there being to the object that must secure our love such a nature requisite in reference to our affections, as philosophers are pleased to ascribe to the world's centre in relation to heavy bodies, which, they teach us, that magnetic point has the double faculty, not only to draw thither, but to keep there. For so untoward and cross-grained are we, in point of our own good, and so unfit to procure, and ready to desert, our own felicity, that neither its excellency is a sufficient motive to carry our addresses to it, nor its possession a competent tie to intercept in us all designs, revolts, and divorces; but we must be used as peevish children are, who, (on the one side) when their mouths are out of taste, and they refuse to take what is necessary for them, must have it not only offered them, but forced upon them, and be (as it were) made to receive it; and who (on the other side) must be restrained from gadding, when the beauty of the mansions they live in, cannot invite their stay; but they would gladly leave the proudest palaces architecture can boast, to

run into the street, and dabble in the kennel. All these three properties of divine constancy are not ill shadowed in the operations of the load-stone, (a mineral, in which I have made too many experiments, not to be by you allowed to make some comparisons to it.) For, first, it never forsakes its inclinations for the steel: next, being united to it, it retains so constantly its attractive qualities, that it gives not the needle any motive of deserting it; and, thirdly, it doth never rightly touch the amorous steel, without leaving an impression, which ever after disposes it to a conversion to that magnetic posture, which best fits it to receive fresh influences. To which, let me add this other resemblance, betwixt God's work on us, and the load-stone's on the iron, that the kind stone attracts a needle to it, not to advantage itself by that union, but to impart its virtue to what it draws. Besides, absence and rivals, those frequent ruiners of other lovers happiness, can threaten nothing of formidable to yours. For, absence (which so divorces us from that which animates us, that lovers do not so improperly stile it death, if death be but the separation of soul and body)

by

by God's ubiquity we are secured from; he is ever present with us, or rather in us. You that not long since so highly valued the opportunities of conversing with your mistress for some few moments, shall here find your priviledges improved to a permission, nay, an invitation, of entertaining the object of your love at all times, no hour renders your visits unseasonable, nor no length tedious: he is rather welcomest to God that comes to him ofteneft, and stays with him longest. What favours were vouchsafed to that ancient Prophetess, (who was likewise one of the first Evangelists) who for many years *departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers, night and day^x*, the beginning of St. Luke's gospel may inform you. The *midnight hymns of Paul and Silas^y*, did not only not disturb or offend him they praised, but procured the visit of an angel to bring them miraculous and unexpected liberty, as a proof of the acceptableness of their seemingly unseasonable devotions. When *Enoch had walked with God^z* as many years as the year has days,

F 4

God

^x Luke ii. 37, &c.

^y Acts vi. 25, &c.

^z Gen. v. 22, 23, 24.

104 SERAPHIC LOVE.

God was so far from being importuned or tired by that lasting assiduity, that vouchsafing him an unexampled exemption from death, he was pleased, by a new and a nearer cut to heaven, to admit him to a yet closer, more immediate, and more undistracted communion with himself. And when Moses had spent no less than *forty days and forty nights*^a in conversing (if I may use so familiar a term) with God in the mount, he brought down thence, instead of a penance for his importunity, so signal and radiant a testimony of God's peculiar favour, that his dazzled country-men were as much disabled, as invited, to gaze on an object of so much wonder. And then, how proud do we see many lovers of their sufferings, when she but knows of them for whom they are endured? but in seraphic love there is not the least good wish, or privatest suffering, nay, not a whispering sigh, or closer thought, that silently groans or aspires in the amorous soul, but he both sees and hears, that puts his servants *tears into his bottle*^b, sweetning and recompencing the greatest misfortunes

^a Exod. xxxiv. 30.

^b Psal. lvi. 8.

fortunes that his love occasions, with such support and joys, as hinder us to feel them, and make them deserve a contrary name. Each amorous soul may say to God with David, *Thou knowest my down-sitting, and my up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts as far off, thou compassedst my paths, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways*^c. And Christ also himself has so attentive an eye upon the amorous soul, that he is held forth in the Apocalypse, as telling the ruler of the church of Smyrna, *I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty*^d. And saying to the angel of the church of Pergamos, *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is, and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth*^e. So that no endearing circumstance of our love escapes unobserved by him, who has done and suffered so much to engage us to it. God remembers not our endeavours to serve him the less, for our having forgotten them. *When*

F 5

saw

^c • Psal. cxxxix. 2, 3.
^e • vers. xii. 13.

^d Rev. ii. 8, 9.

*saw we thee any way distressed, and relieved thee^f, will be the question of those to whom heaven itself will be at the last day awarded, as having ministred to their redeemer. Those, that in degenerate times, such as ours, Lindamor, did like Lot in Sodom, mourn for their sins, that mourned not for their own, and condoled among themselves the spreading wickedness of the times they lived in; though probably the dangers threatned them by the very sinfulness they deplored, made them affect such privacies in their conferences, as freed them from the thoughts of being over-heard; yet the scripture informs us, (and it is as comfortable as well as memorable passage) that *the Lord hearkned and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name; then shall he return, and discern betwixt the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not^z. I know*, says Christ, (not only to the angel of Smyrna, but to each true sufferer for him) *thy works, and tribulation, and poverty: fear none of these things that**

^f Mat. xxv. 37, &c.

^z Mal. iii. 16, 17.

that thou shalt suffer. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life^h.

God is often pleased to accept of those good thoughts and intentions of his servants, which never arrive at actual performances. Though David built not the temple he designed, yet his son, that did it, informs us, that God said unto him, *forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well, in that it was in thine heart, &cⁱ.* And it is the epithet our Saviour gives God, *your father which seeth in secret, &c^k.* Nor need we fear our rivals should supplant us, since we can have none in devotion, whose prayer and endeavour it is not, that God would love us more. For his love to you being (as the chiefest merit) the strongest motive and title unto theirs, they cannot but wish him well whom God doth love so; and cannot wish him better, than by imploring for him fresh additions, both of that love of God, and grateful dispositions to return it. Our Saviour assures us, that *there is joy in the presence of the*

F 6

angels

^h Rev. ii. 9, 10.
Mat. vii. 6.

ⁱ 2 Chron. vi. 8.

*angels of God over one sinner that repenteth*¹. And the sole hymn (except a visionary one) I find recorded of the celestial quire, was sung for a blessing to mankind^m, wherein (for ought I know) their love and sympathy alone concerned them: *For unto us (men) the child is born, and unto us the son is given*ⁿ. *Who took not upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham*^o. So noble and so disinterested doth divine love make ours, that there is nothing, besides the object of that we love more than our concurrents in it, perchance out of a gratitude to their assisting us, to pay a debt (of love and praise) for which (alas!) we find our single selves but too insolvent.

SECT. XVI. Perhaps I need not mind you, Lindamor, that divers passages of the fore-going discourse, suppose the truth of their doctrine, who ascribe to God, in relation to every man, an eternal, unchangeable, and inconditinate decree of election, or reprobation. Yet concerning the controversies betwixt the Calvinists and the Remon-

¹ Luke xv. 7,— 10.

^m Luke ii. 13, 14.

ⁿ Isa. ix. 6.

^o Heb. ii. 15.

Remonstrants, about predestination, and the coherent doctrines, it were improper to give you here my sense. Those that are truly pious of either party, are perhaps otherwise looked on by God than by one another, as contending, which of God's attributes should be most respected; the one seeming to affirm irrespective decrees, to magnify his goodness; and the other to deny them but to secure the credit of his justice. And even in honouring the same attribute, his goodness, these adversaries seem rivals, the one party supposing it best celebrated by believing it so irresistible, that to whom soever it is intended, he cannot but be happy; and the other thinking it most extolled by being believed so universal, that it will make every man happy, if he pleases: the one party electing to honour free grace, by assigning it (as to men) an unlimitedly vast extent; as the other does, by ascribing it to an infallibly victorious decree. But though my haste, and the nature of my theme, make me decline the controversies about predestination; yet since the doctrine that maintains it, is not only by almost all the rest of mankind, but by the rest of the protestant churches themselves, (the Lutherans, and divers learned divines of the church

110 SERAPHIC LOVE.

church of England) not only rejected, but detested as little less than blasphemous, (as indeed they that judge it an error, cannot but be tempted to think it a dangerous one, and of very pernicious consequence, so far forth as its sequels are permitted to have influence on men's practice) I think it not amiss to advertise you, that the doctrine of predestination is not necessary to justify the freeness and the greatness of God's love. For so conspicuous and refulgent a truth is that of God's being the author of man's felicity, that the dispute betwixt the Calvinists and Arminians is not so much concerning the thing, as concerning the manner of its being proffered; the former affirming grace to be irresistibly presented; the latter, though they deny it to be irrejectable, yet granting, not only that it is altogether free and undeserved, but also that the proffer is made both with a power enabling those to whom it is rendered, to accept it, and with such engaging invitations, that man at his first conversion need contribute nothing to his felicity, but the not-wilfully refusing it, and may more properly be said to owe it unto God, than the beggar to owe his alms to his reliever, though he open his hand to receive it,
which

SERAPHIC LOVE. III

which he might have declined to do, if he would have wilfully courted his own prejudice. Christ paid a ransom to redeem us, it is true, and he is therefore called, *The Lord that bought us*^p: but it was God's free goodness, both to provide us that Christ, and to accept of that ransom, neither of which he was obliged to do, and therefore the scripture ascribes it not to the justice, but to the love of God to the world, that *He sent his only begotten son to redeem it*^q: and St. Paul in the same text tells us both that *We are justified*, δωρεάν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι, *freely by his grace*, and yet that it is, διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως *through the Redemption*, (purchased for a ransom; the original word englisht redemption, relating to the price paid for the redeeming of captives) *that is in Jesus Christ*^r. It is confessed on all hands, that merit must be disclaimed, and those that seem to expect something from God as a due, acknowledge, that if his promise did not, their actions could not, make it so; and that it is to his mercy they owe the right they have to confide in his justice. St. Paul, who *having fought the good fight, finished his course,*
and

^p 2 Pet. ii. 1. ^q John iii. 16. ^r Rom. iii. 24.

112 SERAPHIC LOVE.

and kept the faith, expected a crown of righteousness from the Lord,^s under the notion of the righteous judge; yet tells us, *That by grace we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God*^t; whose promises, now they are made to us, allow us indeed to expect heaven from his justice; but *the making us those great and precious promises,*^u (as St. Peter justly styles them) must be acknowledged the pure effect of his free and undeserved goodness; which to believe infinite, we need but consider the disproportion betwixt such a recompence as eternal glory, and the least imperfect performances of ours; which though they needed not pardon, could not at least challenge any reward from him, who, as our creator, has such a right to exact of us what services he pleases, without proposing us any recompence, that our exactest obedience to all his commands, would yet leave us to confess ourselves *unprofitable servants, who have done but what it was our duty to do*^w; and what if we had not done, we had given God, who

^s 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. ^t Eph. ii. 8. ^u 2 Pet. i. 4. ^w Luke xvii. 10.

who had the power, the right and provocation to punish us. And, indeed, so conscious are men generally (if not naturally) to their being beholding to God for their felicity, that even those that mistake or oppose his way of doing them good, will yet be sure to find out some notion or other, under which they may conceive themselves God's debtors for his blessings. That the more sober sort of Roman Catholics themselves, ascribe not so much to merit, (properly so called) nor so little to God's grace, as the more quarrelsome writers of their party have given the more eager disputants of ours occasion to reproach them; were perhaps no difficult task to manifest, if my haste would give me leave. That the Arminians own the freeness and unmeritedness of God's grace, the Remonstrants confession and apology are very careful to satisfy the world*. And even the Socinians, (how prosperously I determine not) are not a little, or industriously, solicitous to free their erroneous doctrine of justification from the objected guilt of its tendency to draw the embracers of it to sacrifice to their own nets,†
and

* Especially Chap. xvii. numb. 5, 6. † Hal. i. 26.

and thank themselves for their felicity. Which brings into my mind a passage that I lately read in one of the chief modern upholders of that sect, Schlichtingius; who is wont, in my opinion, where his subject will bear it, to discourse as fairly and as rationally as almost any writer that I have met with of his perswasion; and who labours to reconcile Socinus's doctrine with the freeness of God's grace, by considerations, which, not to injure him, I shall present you with in his own words: — *Ad retundendam vero* (says he, disputing against the learned Meisnerus) *arrogantiam justificatorum, & ne dicant se meruisse gratiam, non est necesse servum in homine arbitrium inducere; non debet virtus tolli ut tollatur arrogantia. Sufficit, 1. Quod nec velle nec perficere possint, nisi Deus & voluntatem excitet, & vires augeat. 2. Quod ea, quæ divinis adjuti viribus faciunt, nullo modo dignitate & prætio divinæ gratiæ respondeat, sed infinito intervallo ab ea absint*². Nay, the modern and degenerate Jews be, upon the score of being the great patrons of man's free-will, not causlessly esteemed the great oppugners of

² Page 97.

of God's free grace; yet both from their famous rabbi, and my learned acquaintance, Menasseh Ben Israel, and from divers others of their most eminent writers, has the truth sometimes extorted confessions, which though made upon erroneous grounds, were not very far short of orthodox. To which purpose I remember, that a Jewish professor of Hebrew, (who assisted me in my studies of that mysterious tongue) being, as the rest of his nation, an eager and preremptory champion of free-will, conceived, that even that liberty, which to us seems least to indebt men to their creator, did transcendently oblige him unto God. For, one day that we were privately and freely discoursing together of matters of religion, he told me, that he thought men owed more to God's goodness, than the very angels do; for, said he, whereas God, without any good work of theirs, but purely out of his goodness, conferred on them that blessed condition they enjoy; by giving man a free-will, by the good use of which he may glorify his maker, when, by abusing it, it is in his power to dishonour him, he allows man that highest satisfaction and priviledge, of co-operating to his own felicity.

116 SERAPHIC LOVE.

SECT. XVII. And now, Lindamor, we are arrived at the last property, which qualifies God, the fittest object for our love, which is, the advantagiousness of his to us both in the present and the future life. And first, even in this world, we owe God no less than all the goods we possess. We owe him both what we have, and that we are ; for we may truly say of God with the Psalmist, *It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves*^a. And we are not only in his hands, so like *clay in the pot-ter's*^b, that he might have made us any thing ; but we were so purely that negative, from whence we were extracted, that he (if he had pleased) for ever might have left us to our first nothing. His love is the first original and fountain-blessing ; all the rest are but as pipes (and instruments) to convey, and serve but to hand it to us. Your wit wins you applause, your industry heaps you up treasures ; be it granted : but who gave you that wit ? and did both give and prosper that boasted industry ? certainly, God as much gives us all the goods we possess, as he that gives a beggar a thou-
sand

^a Psal. cx. 3.

^b Isa. lxiv. 8.

sand pounds, gives him the cloaths, and meat, and all the bravery it helps him to. But besides these more obvious presents of God's bounty, we enjoy other effects of his goodness, which, though by the customariness of their being possessed, they prove less conspicuous than the other, yet grow no less prized, when the want or loss of them makes us sensible of the true value of them. Had I the leisure, Lindamor, to lead your thoughts with me to the gallies, and shew you there those wretched captives, that are chained to the oars they tug at, and though exposed to all the miseries and hardships of a tempestuous sea, have oftentimes cause given them, by their barbarous usage ashore, to fear the ocean less than any port save death; could I draw from you the curtains of sick and dying men, and open to you that sad scene, where some pine and languish by distempers, that deprive them of all joys, advantages, and (what is more considerable) the uses of life, before they ease them of life itself; others breathe rather than live, perpetually tormented either with their diseases or physic to protract a wretched life, upon terms that turn it into a trouble; and others struggling with the rude pangs of death, are yet

Perchance

perchance less tormented by them, than by the sad prospect of their former life, and the remembrance of those criminal pleasures, which yet it perhaps less troubles them that they must now forego, than that they once enjoyed them. Should I, Lindamor, bring you into hospitals, and shew you there the various shapes of human misery, and how many souls, narrowly lodged (if I may so speak) in synecdochical bodies, see their earthen cottages moulder away to dust; those miserable persons by the loss of one limb after another, surviving but part of themselves, and living to see themselves dead, and buried by piece-meal; should I, to dispatch, Lindamor, shew you all the several companies of mourners, that almost make up mankind, and disclose to you how copious showers of tears do almost every where water (not to say overflow) this vale of miseries; you would perchance see cause to think, that God's privative (if I may so speak) may contend with his positive favours; and that you owe little less for what you are not, than for what you are, to that discriminating mercy of his, to which alone you owe your exemption from miseries, as great as the blessing it confers on
you :

you: for, *Who maketh thee to differ^c?* is a question that may be as well asked in reference to our external, as to our spiritual condition. Which invites me to mind you, Lindamor, that you are yet more engaged to God's love for protecting you from those gross vices that disfigure most men's minds, than from those less dangerous, though more resented, diseases that distemper their bodies.

For, ambition, lust, avarice, revenge, and even that vain conversation^d which young gentlemen are generally pleased to think so innocent, are really more formidable and pernicious diseases and calamities, than those that reduce men to take physic, or thrust them into hospitals. To evince the truth of which paradox, I hope I shall not need to mind you of judging of the dangerousness of diseases by the nobleness of that part affected, since I can tell you, that he that cannot err, seems daily to justify our assertion, by inflicting sickness, and the sharpest outward calamities, on his own dearest children, to preserve them from the contagion

^c 2 Cor. iv. 7.

^d 1 Pet. i. 18.

contagion of sin, or cure them of the unfilial habitudes of it. And therefore, since, when we see a tender mother apply a painful caustic to the neck of her favourite infant, threatened by the apoplexy, we scruple not to conclude, that she thinks the trouble of an issue an evil inferior to the convulsion fit: so when we see our heavenly Father send infirmities and crosses to rescue those he loves from the contagion or dominion of sin; we may safely conclude, he thinks affliction a less evil than guilt, since he is too wise and indulgent a physician to cure with a remedy worse than the disease. In the eighth of Deuteronomy, there is a caution given the Israelites, lest prosperity (which is wont to be a kind of lethe, that makes men forget all, but their enjoyments) should make any of them say in his heart, *My power, and the might of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth. But* (saith the text) *they shall remember the Lord their God: for it is he that giveth them power to get wealth*^e. It is not the revolting Israelites only, of whose ignorance of his bounty God may complain, as he did by the prophet,

by

^e Deut. viii. 17, 18.

by whom he said, *I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms, but they knew not that I healed them*^f. And there are but too many of whom he might say, as he did by the same prophet, *For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oyl, and multiplied her silver and her gold, which they prepared for Baal; therefore will I return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness*^g. And this will make way for the design I had to recommend the advantageousness of God's love, by saying, that as for spiritual goods, he gives us in this life so rich an earnest of expected joys, that even the earnest is a stock large enough to subsist with comfort on, and really out-values and transcends all those momentary pleasures, it requires us to forsake, to keep up a title to eternal ones. But to particularize God's mercies to us in this very life, would certainly take up a considerable part of it. And yet the love God bears us, dies not with us, nor doth (as men's affections) either endure a funeral in our tombs,

G

or

^f Hof. xi. 3.^g Hof. i. 8, 9.

122 SERAPHIC LOVE.

or survive only in an useless grief, (or an esteem as bootless.) No, God's love is so far from resembling the usual sort of friends, who, when they have accompanied us to the grave, do there leave us; that, like the angels, that *carried Lazarus's soul to Abraham's bosom*^h, its officiousness begins then most to appear, when our dark eyes are closed, and is then truest to the beloved soul, when she forsakes the body; giving each blessed saint cause to say of God, what Naomi did of Boaz, that *He hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead*ⁱ. Now, indeed, (says our Saviour's favourite) *are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know when he shall appear, we shall be like him*^k. This blest expectation must be now my theme, because the narrow limits, which my design hath placed to this discourse, (of the advantages accruing from God's love) will leave no more room untaken up by heaven.

SECT. XVIII. But, Lindamor, before I proceed to set forth to you the greatness of the felicity reserved for us in heaven, it will, I fear,

^h Luke xvi. 22. ⁱ Ruth ii. 20. ^k 1 John iii. 1.

fear, be requisite to mind you of the lawfulness of having an eye to it. For many, not undeservedly applauded preachers, have of late been pleased to teach the people, that to hope for heaven is a mercenary, legal, therefore unfilial affection. Indeed, to hope for heaven as wages for work performed, or by way of merit, in the proper and strict acception of that term, were a presumption, to which none of the divines, we dissent from, can be too much an enemy, nor perhaps more so, than I am. But to take in God's blessings among the motives of loving God, is but to do as he did, who said, *I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications*¹; and to look upon the joys of heaven, to comfort and support us in the hardships and losses to be undergone in our journey thitherwards, is to imitate no worse a man than Moses, of whom it is said, that *he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Ægypt; for he had respect*, or turned his eye, (ἀνέβλεπε) unto the recompence of the reward^m. It is indeed, Lindamor, a happy frame of mind, to be able to

G 2

love

¹ Psal. cxvi. 1.

^m Heb. xi. 26.

love God purely for himself, without any glance at our own advantage. But though I dare not deny, that it is possible to attain to so high and disinterested a kind of love, yet I think that that excellency supposed to be vouchsafed to some men, is not by the scripture exacted as a duty from all men. Were all the recompence of piety of a worldly nature, and to be here received, the actions invited to, by the intuition of it, might pass for mercenary. But when heaven is chiefly hoped for, as it will admit us unto the fruition of God himself in Christ, and that the other joys expected there are so far from being of a sensual or a worldly nature, that they are known not to be attainable, till by death, the senses and bodies themselves, and all the meerly animal faculties, be abolished; for a heaven so considered, I say, to forego readily all the pleasures of the senses, and undergo chearfully all the hardships and dangers that are wont to attend a holy life, is, Lindamor, such a kind of mercenariness, as none, but a resigned, noble, and believing soul, is likely to be guilty of. If I should say, that fear itself, and even the fear of hell, may be one just able motive of men's actions, though I should

should propose, what those I am reasoning with would think a paradox, yet I should perhaps hold forth therein no more than the scripture does, *Let us therefore fear* (says the writer to the Hebrews) *lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it*ⁿ. And no less eminent an herald of the gospel than St. Paul, who successfully maintained the evangelical against the legal spirit, thus professeth of himself, *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away*^o. And it was not to slaves or hirelings that Christ directs this admonition, *I say unto you, my friends, be not a afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear; fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you,* (a gemination, which the present controversy shews not to have been causeless) *fear him*^p. Where the paraphrase given of God, is not barely descriptive but ratiocinative, (to bor-

G 3

row

ⁿ Heb. iv. i.
xii. 4, 5.

^o 1 Cor. ix. 27.

^p Luke

row those terms of the schools) in warning us not only whom we should, and should not fear, but why we should fear the one and not the other. As when St. Paul says, *I know whom I have trusted*, he means what manner of person, how faithful, (as St. Peter elsewhere calls God) *and how omnipotent*¹: whence immediately he adds, *And I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*². More texts of the same import might be added, if the design of those already alledged were other than to facilitate the admission of the more plausible truth we have been making out, and which to us seems very clearly held forth in those, and the like scriptures, which are therefore cited out of the new testament, that they might have the greater authority with one sort of our antagonists. *I press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*³. *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*
Laying

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 19. ² 2 Tim. i. 12. ³ Phil. ii. 14. ⁴ Rev. xxii. 14.

Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life. To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for (ζῆλον) glory, and honour, and immortality, eterna^l life^u. And of Christ himself, whose love to God is questionless filial and unequalable, it is said, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God^z. Nor see I why it should be unfilial for a child of God to further the raising of those passions, which his heavenly father intends to have raised in him, upon the same grounds and motives that God is pleased to imploy to excite them. And since the scripture seems plainly to invite our hopes by recording St. Paul's having said, Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things; now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible^y; and by representing our Saviour himself, as saying in one place, Rejoyce, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward

G 4

^u 1 Tim. vi. 15. ^z Heb. xii. 2. ^y 1 Cor. ix, 25.

128 SERAPHIC LOVE.

reward in heaven^z: in another, *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*^a: and divers others speaking to the like purpose; since, I say, the scripture seems thus to allure our hopes, would it not be a kind of accusing it of an aptness to delude and ensnare us, to teach, that it proposeth to us the powerfulest objects to incite our passions, if it be sinful to cherish and harbour the passions naturally belonging to those objects? And certainly, Lindamor, since God, who, as our creator, knows the frame and constitution of man's soul, incomparably better than he himself, is pleased to deal with our hopes and our fears, to engage us to his service, it very ill becomes us, either to quarrel with his methods of working on our spirits, or to reject any help which he has been pleased to afford a piety, which, for ought ever I could observe, does even in the best men find resistance enough to keep any help that can be employed to promote it from being superstitious. And truly, the animating or discouraging influence that hope, or the want of it, is

^z Mat. v. 12

^a Revel. ii.

is wont to have upon our endeavours, makes me very apprehensive, that since the enlivening hopes of heaven are not able to make most men's endeavours other than very languid, the forbidding these supporting hopes would soon weaken and decrease our endeavours into none at all.

SECT. XIX. But, Lindamor, though I may perhaps have taken some pains in studying controversial divinity, yet I take so little pleasure in writing of it, that though not only a seasonable duty to truth, but a necessary one to the ensuing part of this discourse, have pressed me to serve in this cause; yet I shall perhaps obtain your pardon sooner than my own, for having thus long suspended the discoursing to you of the advantagiousness of God's love to us, as it gives us here a right, and will hereafter give us an admission, to heaven! the bright seat of so much happiness, that we shall scarcely count amongst our joys, that heaven is the seat of them. There the excellency of the possessed goods shall as much disappoint our expectations, as in other fruitions the emptiness is wont to do. The apostle tells us, that *eye hath not seen,*

130 SERAPHIC LOVE.

nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him^b. Such pure refined delights not only stoop not unto sense, but are sublime enough even to transcend imagination. When fancy hath formed and shaped the perfectest ideas, that its abstractions can make, of blessedness; our own more happy experiences of greater, must disabuse us, when we come to heaven; which is a soil, whose fruitfulness is so confined to joy, that even our disappointments and mistakes shall there contribute to our happiness; which will so much partake of his immensity, whose gift it is, that you see the apostle gives it a negative description: and to create in us apprehensions underogatory from what we shall possess, not only removes our thoughts from all we do enjoy, but exalts them above all that we can fancy. At which way of proceeding, that you may the less wonder, Lindamor, be pleased to consider, that in heaven our faculties shall not only be gratified with suitable and acceptable objects, but shall be heightened and enlarged,

^b 1 Cor. ii. 9.

enlarged, and consequently our capacities of happiness, as well encreased as filled. A child not yet released out of the homely prison of the womb, cannot there possibly frame ideas of those delights, which will be afforded him by the pleasing noises, and the glittering objects, that will present themselves to him after his birth. And the same child, whilst he continues in his nonage, though he may with delights look upon emblems finely drawn and painted, and may take some pleasure in beholding the neat and surprizing characters and flourishes of a Greek and Hebrew bible curiously printed, yet he cannot then imagine the pleasure the same objects will afford him, when age and study shall have ripened and instructed his intellectuals, and made him capable both of understanding and relishing the excellent moralities, couched in those ingenious emblems, and the profound and saving mysteries, wherewith that divine book, the scripture, (especially in its original tongues) does to an intelligent and religious peruser, appear replenished. Such a double advantage, Lindamor, among others, the admission into heaven brings those, to whom that blessing is

132 SERAPHIC LOVE.

vouchsafed: for, besides that set of objects, (if I may so speak) so new, and so peculiar to heaven, that their ideas could never enter into men's thoughts before their admission there; besides this, I say, our then enlarged capacities will enable us, even in objects which were not altogether unknown to us before, to perceive things formerly undiscerned, and derive thence both new and greater satisfactions and delights. Wonder not, Lindamor, that in mentioning the joys of heaven, I use expressions I find less detractory from a theme, as much above our praises, as the heaven they are enjoyed in is above our heads. For, though such expressions may seem somewhat tumid and aspiring, and fitter much for one that celebrates, than for one that but asserts, yet cannot I scruple to use seeming hyperboles in the mention of felicities, which make the highest hyperboles but seeming ones. For those joys, Lindamor, of heaven, are like its stars, which, by reason of our remoteness from them, appear extremely little, though really in themselves they are so vast, that a less than the largest is by odds greater than the biggest object upon earth, nay, than the whole earth

earth itself. Therefore, as if I were to take you with me to contemplate the planets, I would shew you them through such a telescope, as by a greatning those bright objects in comparison of what to an unassisted eye they appear, doth somewhat lessen the disadvantage of remoteness, and shews them with less detracti-
 on from their true magnitude; so mentioning to you the felicities of heaven, I think it not unlawful or improper to endeavour by representations, transcending what they appear, to give you notions less inferior to what they are.

SECT. XX. In heaven, then, we shall taste happiness enough, to enable us to rectify the definition of it. We may there be instructed how to name and rate all goods by those that will centre in the felicity we shall possess, which shall be there made up of the confluence, perfection, and perpetuity of all true joys. For heaven will make us happy, (not as philosophy pretends to do) by the confinement, but by the fruition of our desires, which shall neither fail in the choice of their objects, nor miss in the enjoyment of them; but be, both unerringly just, and infallibly

libly accomplished : in the former of which properties, (as our then rectified reason will consider things) we shall think ourselves happier (yet) than in the latter. We shall there resemble the saints we here admire, and shall not only see; and be like those pious worthies, whose virtues eclipse theirs, which among the heathens deified less deserving Heroes; those excellent persons that did as well enoble as instruct mankind, giving us cause to blush that we are men, and whose stories have the unparallel'd honour of being recorded by inspired pens; those *spirits*; I say, *of just men made perfect* c, as the scriptures terms them, shall be our constant and familiar company, into whose blessed society we shall not only be welcome, but increase it. In heaven we shall have a blessed and familiar conversation with those same glorious spirits, whose nature doth invest them with such a lustre, that all the disadvantages of their disguises when they appear to us, do scarce suffice to confine our raptures to respects below idolatry, and darken them into objects for our wonder,

not

not adoration. There we shall see (a fight worthy dying for) that blessed Saviour, of whom the scripture does so much and so excellently entertain us, and who having done and suffered so much for us, does so highly deserve of us, both upon the score of his infinite perfections, and upon the account of his inestimable benefits. Yes, there shall we see that holy and divine person, who, when he vouchsafed (as his favourite disciple speaks) *to pitch his tent among us*^d, and dwell with men on earth, to fit them by his merits and example to dwell with him in heaven, did so admirably mix an awful majesty with an humble meekness, and the assumed infirmities of his human nature, with the seasonable corruscations of his divine; and expressed in his whole life, so perfect and exemplary a virtue, and yet so much sweetness and gentleness towards those aspirers to it, that were the most short of it; that the Jews themselves could say of him, that *He had done all things well*^e; and his very enemies, that were employed to apprehend him as a malefactor, confessed even to those
that

^d Εοικη:ωμεν εν ημιν John i. 14. ^e Mat.
vii. 37.

136 SERAPHIC LOVE.

that sent them to do so, that *never man spake like him*^f. And his apostles, who had most opportunity to pry narrowly into his actions, and were of a condition and breeding very unlike to infuse into them heroic resolutions, did, in spite of the frequent reproofs their failings extorted from him, and of the hardships that attended his service, think even death itself in his company, more eligible, than life led out of it; *Let us also go that we may die with him*^g, (says even the distrustful Thomas to his fellow disciples.) But, Lindamor, we shall there see the Son of God, not in that *form of a servant*^h, which he put on that he might suffer for us, and exercise his priestly and prophetic function here below; but in that regal state and condition, which belongs to him by virtue of his kingly office; on whose score he is stiled in the scripture, *King of kings, and lord of lords*ⁱ, all power and authority being (as himself speaks) given him both in heaven and in earth. And how nobly attended may we suppose this divine monarch to be in his exalted condition in heaven, when in his state of humili-

^f John vii. 46. ^g John xi. 16. ^h Phil. ii. 7. ⁱ Rev. xix. 16. ^k Mat. xxviii. 18.

humiliation on earth, whilst he was in the *wilderness among the wild beasts*, the angels are recorded to have *ministred unto him*¹; and, whilst he lay swathed in a homely manger, the multitude of the cælestial host were heard to solemnize his miraculous birth^m, according to that passage of the writer to the Hebrews, *When he bringeth in the first begotten into the world*, (he saith) *and let all the angels of God worship him*ⁿ! And yet such considerable and noble creatures, those immaterial intelligences, called angels, are, that one of them in one night was able to destroy above a hundred and fourscore thousand men, in the blasphemous *Senacherib's impious camp*^o. And so much majesty and superiority does their nature give them in reference even to the eminentest of mortals, that, when the undaunted Joshua had boldly challenged one of them, that appeared to him in the likeness of a man, and demanded, whom he was for; when he knew him to be an angel (unless he supposed him to be that promised Messiah, who is elsewhere called *The angel of the covenant*^p, as it is in the original,

¹ Mat. i. 13.
i. 6.

^m Luke i.
^o 2 Kings xix. 35.

ⁿ Heb.
^p Mal. iii. 1.

original, and in the same text, *The Lord*) he alters his address unto him into this submissive one, *What saith my Lord unto his servant* ? And even wise and holy Daniel himself, who was the second person of the world for power, and the first for much nobler attributes, wisdom and understanding, who saw so many governors of vast provinces, and professors of admired magic, inferior to himself, yet confesses to the angel that appeared to him, that he was confounded and disanimated at his presence, and adds, *How can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord* ? We may safely therefore expect, that we shall then behold our Saviour, not in those disguises which disfigured him in their eyes, that only considered his sufferings, but in that triumphant condition, wherewith they are now rewarded. The thorns of his (now no more galling, but adorning) crown will appear upon that radiant head of his, more glorious, than those of the flaming bush, wherein God appeared to Moses*. And we shall not see that despicable form, which

^a Josh. v. 13, 14.
ii. 2.

^r Dan. x. 17.

^s Exod.

which made the prophet say, (personating the generality of the Jewish nation contemporary with the-Messias) *He hath no form, nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire*^t. But we shall see him encompassed with so much majesty, and shining with so much of his genuine splendor and beauty, that we shall deservedly esteem him *Nephle, the admirable*^u. And our ravished souls shall, by the more attentive contemplation of him, but find more cause to imitate the spouse in Solomon's mystic epithalamium; who having dwelt upon the beauty of the several parts that concurred to the accomplishing the divine bridegroom, exclaims in an epiphonema, very contrary to the expression lately mentioned in the prophet, *he is altogether desires*, or by an Hebraism, *most desirable*, which our English renders, *he is altogether lovely*^w. His eyes will there appear, as St. John represents them, of active fire^x, and will, into the willing breasts of the ravished beholders, shoot flames as pure, as holy, and as deathless as those fathers of the church, who believed not
the

^t Isa. liii. 2. ^u IIa. ix. 6. ^w Cant.
v. 10. ^x Rev. i. 14.

the angels altogether incorporeal, may be supposed to have conceived the seraphims to consist of. Certainly, since (as the scripture informs us) *It never entered into the heart of man, what God hath reserved in heaven for those that love him*; that glory can be but imperfectly expressed by the bare epithet of inconceivable, with which God rewards the meritorious sufferings and obedience of that only begotten son of his love, for whose sake he is pleased to confer on so many thousands of men, unimaginable glories. He that vouchsafes, even to many of his servants a brightness, like that of the stars^y, will sure communicate a more radiant lustre to the *sun of righteousness*^z, that only son of his, *whom* (to borrow inspired expressions) *he hath made heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds: who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high^a; far above all principality,*
and

^y Dan. xii. 3.
i. 3.

^z Mal. iv. 2.

^a Heb.

and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come^b. Thereby exalting him not only above all earthly princes and potentates, but even above the highest orders of the spirits of the coelestial hierarchy.

SECT. XXI. But apprehend not, Lindamor, that this sublime exaltation of Christ will make him despise the meanest of his saints, or disdain communion with him. For St. Paul assures us, that he was in the *form of God*^c, when he vouchsafed to take upon him the form of a servant, to make us free; and sure, he that condescended so far, and stooped so low, to invite and bring us to heaven, will not refuse us a glorious reception there. In the days of his flesh he was pleased to own Lazarus, even in the dishonours of the grave, and vouchsafed him in that despicable condition the glorious title of his friend; and when he descended the mount of Olives, all the loud acclamations of the glad multitude, that

sang

^b Eph. i. 21.

^c Phil. ii. 7.

142 SERAPHIC LOVE.

sang Hofannahs to him, and strewed his way with their palms, their vestments, and their praises, could not divert him deploring, even with tears, Jerusalem's approaching fate^d; and expressing, in the midst of his triumphs, a concern for the very worst and stubbornest of his enemies. And, lest it should be thought, that he was thus concerned for worthless mortals, only whilst he shared and felt the miseries of their condition, give me leave to observe to you, Lindamor, that immediately after his resurrection, whilst the sense of the sudden and unexampled change of his condition was fresh upon him, and the remembrance of the apostles ingratitude in deserting him, almost as recent; he sticks not to give those very disciples that forsook him, the glorious title, (and that a more familiar one than we find him to have allowed them on earth) of his brethren; and particularly shews himself solicitous for that Peter^e, who, in spite of all those empty boasts, where-with he not only seemed to defy death, but Christ's prediction too, did not only forsake his master, but denied him. He can in hea-
ven

^d Math. xxviii 10.

^e Mark xvi 7.

ven be so concerned for his distressed members here on earth, that not only he can take notice of expiring Stephen, through that cloud of fatal stones that battered down his prison^f; and can, when Saul was persecuting the vulgar Christians, cry out unto him, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*^g as if he, and those that love him, were but one: but in the messages he sends to the angels or governors of the seven churches, he sufficiently manifests, that single christians may be as particularly in his thoughts, as if they had no other object^h: his greatness will not make his kindness less familiar, but only more obliging; he disdains not, even after his ascension, to say, *Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me*ⁱ. That king, in the parable, by whom himself is represented, is pleased himself to welcome each individual trusty servant with a peculiar *Euge bone serve*^k! And in another parable he scruples not to represent the great

^f Acts vi. ^g Acts ix. 4. ^h In
the second and third Chapters of the *Apocalypse*.
ⁱ Rev. iii. 20. ^k Matth. xxv.

great condescensions and familiarity, where-
 with the Lord shall remunerate the faithful
 and watchful servants, by telling his disciples,
*Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord,
 when he cometh, shall find so watching. Verily,
 I say unto you, that he shall gird himself,
 and will make them sit down to meat, and
 will come forth to serve them*¹. At which
 expression, you will the less admire, if you
 consider, that besides that it is parabolical, and
 probably hyberbolical, and therefore not to be
 taken (as the French speak, *au pied de la lettre*)
 in a strict sense: we find in the evangelical sto-
 ry, that our Saviour disdained not to converse
 familiarly with publicans and sinners, nor even
 to wash the feet of his own disciples; and since
 he condescended to such familiarities to those
 frail mortals, so many of whom were apt to
 turn the favours of God into wantonness, we
 may the less admire at his gracious con-
 descensions to those, the sinfulness of whose
 condition will keep them from turning his
 vouchsafements into any thing but occasions
 of joy and gratitude. Marvel not, Linda-
 mor,

¹ Luke. xii. 37.

mor, as at an impertinency, that I appear so solicitous to possess you with high apprehensions of the supereminent dignity and felicity of our exalted Saviour; and that in the loftiest and most magnificent expressions, the scripture affords me, I have endeavoured to make out to you, that the bright sun of righteousness is now grown incapable of suffering eclipses, but shines with unclouded and unequalled splendor; and that we shall in heaven (as the writer to the Hebrews speaks) *see Jesus, who was made a little* (or for a short while, *Βραχυτε*) *lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory, and honour*^m. For it will make heaven more heavenly to us, to find him reigning there, who hath suffered so much for us; and for whom, if we ever come thither, we shall have so much suffered. For, since our love will, as the rest of our surviving graces, be perfected and grow compleat in heaven, the ineffable happiness of our dear Redeemer must needs bring an encrease to ours, commensurate to the ardency of our love for him, and we shall relish no happiness more than that

H which

^m Heb. ii. 9.

which is therefore ours, because he is happy, and supposes in him, what it confers on us. Besides that, since the regal dignity, wherein (as Mediator) he is instated, may make us owe our salvation to his sentence, as well as to his merits; heaven itself will be inestimably endeared to us, by our enjoying it upon his account. I need not tell you, what a value lovers are wont to set upon the least favours that can be bestowed on them by their mistresses, and that oftentimes a worthless ribband, a bracelet of hair, or some such trifle, that nothing can make precious but her presenting it, is higher valued by the transported lover, than the richest presents of nature, or of fortune. How great a blessing must it then be, Lindamor, to owe joys that need not endearing circumstances to merit the name of happiness, to a person so beloved, that even heaven itself will bring more felicity to the amorous soul, as it is a proof of his love, than that it is a donative of his bounty; as passionate brides do incomparably more value the wedding-rings which their glad lovers give them, as pledges, than as gold. It is said of the persecuted and disgraced apostles, that *they rejoiced to have been counted worthy to suffer*
for

for his nameⁿ. But if they deservedly rejoiced to be allowed to suffer for him, of how much joy shall they have just cause, that are admitted to reign with him? His having supported the hardships and the toils (for I must not now call them evils) to which our afflicted condition of mortality is exposed, does so much alleviate them, and refresh us under them, that in this sense also it may be truly said, that *the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his hurts we are healed*^o. But he that relieved us even by his cross, will sure do more for us by his crown, when he shall admit, and even invite, each faithful servant to no less a blessing, than *to enter into his master's joy*^p. So rich a source of happiness did Christ design to make himself to us in all his capacities and conditions, that in heaven and in earth it was, and will be, his gracious and constant employment, to share our griefs, or impart to us his joys; and either lessen our miseries by his sufferings, or encrease our happiness by his felicity.

H 2

SECT.

ⁿ A&S v. 41.
xxv. 21.

^o Isa. liii. 5. ^p Mat.

SECT. XXII. Expect not, Lindamor, that I should solemnly beg your pardon for this seeming excursion, till I come to think it a digression, to insist on the blessedness of Christ in heaven, and treating of the happiness which those that love him will enjoy there. Wherefore, not to spend time in imploring a needless forgiveness, I shall proceed to tell you, Lindamor, that in heaven we shall not only see our elder brother Christ, but probably also all our kindred, friends, and relations, that living here in his fear, died in his favour. For, since our Saviour tells us, that *the children of the resurrection shall be as angels, equal to, or like the angels*^a; who yet, in the visions of Daniel and St. John, appear to be acquainted with each other; since, in the parable of the miserable epicure, and the happy beggar, the father of the faithful is represented as knowing, not only the person, and present condition, but the past story of Lazarus^r: since the instructor of the Gentiles confidently expects his converted and pious Thessalonians to

^a Luk. xx. 36.

^r Luke xvi.

to be *his crown at that great day*, when the *having turned many to righteousness*^{*}, shall, as the scripture foretells, confer a star-like and immortal brightness; since (which is chiefly considerable) the knowledge of particular actions, and, consequently, persons, seem requisite to the attainment of that great end of God, in the day of judgment, the manifestation of his punitive and remunerative justice: since, I say, these arguments, besides divers others, are afforded us by the scripture, we may safely conclude it probable, that we shall know each other in a place, where, since nothing requisite to happiness can be wanting, we may well suppose (at least, if we can imagine here, what we shall think there) that we shall not want so great a satisfaction, as that of being knowingly happy in our otherselves, our friends. Nor is this only probable, Lindamor, but it is not improbable, that those friends that know us in heaven, shall welcome us thither. For, since Christ assures us, that the very angels (though they be so far from being related to our persons, that they are foreigners to our very nature) receive accession of joy for a relenting

H 3 sinner,

^{*} Theff. ii. 19, 20.

150 SERAPHIC LOVE.

sinner, that by repentance begins to turn towards God^t; you will not think it absurd, that in a place where charity shall not only continue (as St. Paul speaks^u) but grow perfect, our dear friends should rejoyce to see us, not only begin to turn towards God, but come home to him^u. Nor is it unlikely, that our transported souls shall mutually congratulate each other, their having now fully escaped the numerous rocks, and shelves, quick-sands, and threatning storms, and no less dangerous calms, through which they are at length arrived at that peaceful haven, where innocence and delight (which are here so seldom matched) are inseparable companions, both of each other, and each blessed resident. With those friends we here lamented, we shall there rejoyce. And it will be but need, that the discovery of each others virtues should bring us to a mutual knowledge of our persons; for otherwise, we shall be so changed, that we should never know our friends; (and should scarce know ourselves, were not an eminent encrease of knowledge a part of that

^t Luke xv. 7. ^u 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

that happy change.) For those departed friends, whom at our last separation we saw disfigured by all the ghastly horrors of death, we shall then see assisting about the majestic throne of Christ, with their once *vile bodies transfigured into the likeness of his glorious body*^w, mingling their glad acclamations with the hallelujahs of thrones, principalities, and powers, and the most dignified favourites of the celestial court. I need not tell you, Lindamor, that we shall be more justly transported at this meeting, than was good old Jacob at that of his son Joseph, whom having long mourned for dead and lost, he found not only alive, but a great favourite, ready to welcome him to an unknown court. For, whereas the patriarch said to his son, *Now let me die, since I have seen thy face*^x; the seeing of our friends in heaven will assure us, that we shall for ever live with them there. The re-union of friends being there as privileged from divorce, as that of soul and body, (which scarce will be more strict and satisfactory.) For, here indeed, if our friends do not allay our love or affection

H 4

by

^w Phi'. iii. 21.

^x Gen. xlv. 30.

by unwelcome actions, or their contagious sufferings, we commonly doat on them to a degree, that, as it were, reduces God to deprive us of them, and snatch our idols, and his rivals, from us. But there, our, on both sides, compleated graces, will not only deserve, but allow a higher strain of friendship. The near contemplation and fruition of the infinitely transcendant perfections of the creator, keeping all our kindness to the creatures, not only subordinate to the love we owe to God, but grounded on it; as excited needles, when they stick fastest to each other, owe their union to their having both been touched by the loadstone, to which, they have therefore both of them stronger inclinations than either to the other.

SECT. XXIII. There, probably, we shall satisfactorily understand those deep and obscure mysteries of religion, which the profoundest clerks, that love not to flatter themselves, acknowledge they are unable fully to comprehend; being, after all the toil and industry of their anxious enquiries, reduced to sit down with the apostle's *ἐκθαύβω* in admiration of that depth, whose bottom they cannot fathom.
There

There we shall understand those obscure passages of (that divine book, and uncapable of flattery) the scripture, which, notwithstanding all that bold critics, and learned expositors, have attempted to illustrate it, does still continue, in many places, obscure. There, discerning how exquisitely the several parts of scripture are fitted to the several times, persons, and occurrences, wherein their all-foreseeing author intended most to use them, we shall discern not only a reconcileableness, but a friendship, and perfect harmony, betwixt those texts, that here seem most at variance, and shall discover not only the sense of the obscurer passages, but the requisiteness of their having been written so obscurely. That strange and peculiar, as well as otherwise cryptical method and stile of scripture, which often costs us so much study to find it rational, we shall there discover to be admirable, and worthy of its omniscient author. There, I hope, we shall have clearly expounded to us those riddles of providence, which have, but too often, tempted even good men to question God's conduct in the government of the world; whilst the calamities and

154 SERAPHIC LOVE

persecutions of virtue, and innocence, seem approved by him, who accumulates prosperities on their criminal opposers. There we shall be convinced, that all these seeming irregularities, which the heathen thought fit to impute to the giddy whimsies of a blind female deity, are not only consistent with God's justice and goodness, but are productions of it. And though such a belief do here, to intelligent persons, seem perhaps a greater piece of self-denial, than to refrain from wine, gold, or mistresses; yet in heaven it will appear as reasonable, as here we find it difficult. For, as Bildad speaks in Job, *We are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are but a shadow*; and the shortness of our transitory lives, not permitting us to continue long enough spectators here, to see above a scene or two at most of that great play, acted by mankind upon the stage of the world; it is no wonder we are apt to harbour sinister thoughts of the contriver of a plot, whose neither beginning nor end we are acquainted with; which yet is little less injurious, than it were to censure the lofty tragedian Seneca, or some other matchless artist, having perused but a piece of some tragedy, whereof the latter part never

never arrived at our view. But, when once God's whole plot (if I may so speak) and conduct in the administration of the world, shall come to be disclosed; all those revolutions and occurrences of empires, states, families, and particular persons, which men are here so prone to quarrel with, will there appear so just, so requisite, and so seasonable, that those very things, which here tempted us to deny God, shall there engage us to praise him; and we shall not so properly be satisfied with his providence, as ravished. But especially, we shall be transported with wonder and gratitude, when God shall vouchsafe to discover to his particular servants, the reasons of his dispensations towards them, and make out to them not only the necessity and justice, but even the mercifulness of those very afflictions, that were most imputed to his severity, (no stroke from God's paternal hand, either lighting sooner, or falling heavier, or staying longer, than the occasion, that extorted it, exacted) and convince them, that their hopes were never disappointed, but to secure their title to better things than those they hoped for; nor their inferior interests prejudiced, but for the advantage of their supreme ones. Yes, all

156 SERAPHIC LOVE.

that unwelcome darkness, that here surrounded our purblind understandings, will vanish at the dawning of that bright, and (as St. Peter's ² expression may be interpreted) eternal day; wherein, the resolution of all those difficulties, which here exercised (and perhaps distressed) our faith, shall be granted us to reward it. And I must profess to you, Lindamor, (as unfashionable as such a profession may seem in a gentleman not yet two and twenty) that I find the study of those excellent themes, God's word, and his providence, so difficult, and yet so pleasing and inviting, that could heaven afford me no greater blessing than a clear accompt of the abstruse mysteries of divinity and providence, I should value the having my understanding gratified and enriched with truths of so noble and precious a nature, enough to court heaven at the rate of renouncing for it all those unmanly sensualities, and trifling vanities, for which inconsiderate mortals are wont to forfeit the interest their Saviour so dearly bought them in it.

SECT.

SERAPHIC LOVE. 157

SECT. XXIV. Nor shall we only converse with saints and angels, but with that infinitely more glorious deity that made them what they are, without at all impoverishing himself. In heaven, we shall enjoy (its maker) God, and *see him as he is*^a, who (as the scripture telleth us) shall then be *all in all*^b: comprising all the goods, we value in the creatures, as eminently and fully, as the sun doth the light that twinkleth in the stars.

If one that was none of the least of the philosophers, scrupled not to tell the man that asked him, what he was born for, that it was to contemplate the sun; if our best naturalists themselves, though the darkness that is here cast upon things, and the dimness of our intellectual eyes, (which I remember Aristotle fitly compares to those of an owl at noon-day) permit us to discern but very little of that wisdom, power, and goodness which he has expressed in the creation, are yet often transported and ravished with a just admiration of the perfections he has displayed in his workmanship; if the wise queen, that came so far to visit Solomon, was put almost into an extasy by

^a 1 John iii. 2. ^b 1 Cor. xv. 28. ^c *Anaxagoras*.

158 SERAPHIC LOVE.

by the sight of his, (though wise, yet human) ordering of things; and if the angels themselves (as St. Peter informs us) *desire to look into the mysterious contrivances of God^d*, in order to man's redemption; how great a satisfaction, Lindamor, may we justly conceive it must needs be, to be admitted to see so much of God, as heaven will discover to us? especially since so much of our future happiness will consist in that beatific vision, (as the school-men justly call it) that St. John concluded, that *we shall be like God*, because *we shall see him as he is^e*. And our Saviour himself paraphrases our celestial felicity by this blessed vision, where he says, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God^f*: as, on the other side, the writer to the Hebrews employs the being denied the sight of that divine object, as a description of extreme wretchedness, in that text where, having exhorted those to whom he writes, to *follow peace and holiness^g*; he adds, as the formidablest menace which he could make use of, to deter them from fighting his exhortation, *without which, no man shall see the Lord*. And by this vision our Saviour seems to describe the happiness

even

^d 2 Pet. i. 12. ^e 1 John iii. 2. ^f Mat. v. 8.
^g Heb. xii. 14.

even of angels; where, forbidding the scandalizing of any of those little ones that believe in him, he adds, to enforce what he had said, that *their angels do always see the face of his father in heaven*^b. We shall be so taken up with the contemplation and fruition of that glorious object, (in whose infinity all goods are included and dilated) that ages, numberless as the joys that beatific vision abounds with, will scarce afford us leisure for a diversion to any other pleasures, than those itself creates, which are so numerous and so entire, that we shall there desire nothing that we have not, except more tongues to sing more praises to him, or at least a capacity to pay him greater thanks for what we have. And even those desires, that God's gracious acceptance will make, in being conceived, accomplished: for, otherwise heaven's residents scarce know any other want, than that of need to wish; the compleat blessedness of their condition, reducing them to a happy uselessness of wishes, by affording them a full pre-possession of all the objects of desire. There time, like fire, having destroyed what ever it could prey on, shall at last die itself, and shall go out into eter-

^b Mat. xviii. 10.

eternity ; whose nature is such, that though our joys, after some centuries of years, may seem to have grown elder, by having been enjoyed so many ages, yet will they really still continue new, not only upon the scores of their welcomness and freshness, but by their perpetually equal (because infinite) distance from a period. There, our felicity shall always be the same, yet ever new. Weariness arguing imperfection, either in the object, or the appetite ; the former of which is impossible in God, and the latter shall cease in heaven. Where our felicity shall be so great, that variety (itself) shall not be needed as a part of it. And, if heaven do admit variety, it may be supposed such a one, as shall consist in a further knowledge of the first object (God) not a forsaking of it ; and such as arises from the fixed beholding of the changing-necks of doves, or such as we may see in the diversified refraction of the same sparkling diamond. In God there is (if I may so speak) such a various identity, that the fruition of him both satisfies and creates desires : though that, without satiety ; and this, without disquiet. Other delights, like the usual cloaths we wear, quickly grow stale, and are soon worn out ;

out; whereas celestial pleasures participate the prerogative of the Jews garments in the wilderness¹, of not impairing by being used long. But as the amorous needle, once joined unto the load-stone, would never, uncompelled, forsake the enchanting mineral; but, after ages, cling no less closely to it than at the first moment of their union; so do the saints in heaven, with the same undiminished freshness, ever possess their joys, as if each moment were first that they possessed them in. And, if their happiness does not improve by lasting enjoyment, it is, perhaps, but because it was at first incapable of increase. Or, if our pleasures do admit accession, they shall receive it from our assurance, that we shall taste them for ever, and perpetually repeat (or rather continue) the same renewed fruitions to an eternity, endeared by nothing more, than by the quiet leisure it will afford us, undistractedly, to employ it in celebrating of the author's praises; and in a condition, happier in that by it we grow past doing, than past suffering ill. In heaven, (in a word) our inexhausted joys will be so numberless,

¹ Deut. xxix. 5.

berless, and so immense, that we shall need (as well as have) eternity itself to take them fully.

SECT. XXV. But, Lindamor, it was not my design to give you a particular topography of this celestial Canaan; but only in a few words to let you see, that *it is a land flowing with milk and honey*. And though I acknowledge, I have given you but dark descriptions (and sometimes rather poetical than chorographical) of what the apostle stiles, *The inheritance of the saints in light*; yet since, to whet our longings for fruitive (or experimental) knowledge, it is reserved among the prerogatives of being in heaven, to know how happy we shall be, when there; and since, what the scripture hath revealed of paradise, seems meant rather to quicken our obedience, than satisfy our curiosity; I may, for those purposes, have perhaps tolerably performed that task (of heavenly topography) by the acknowledgments of my disability to do it worthily. I shall now only add this property of our expected bliss, that the vast multitude of partners does detract nothing from each private share, nor does the publickness of it lessen propriety in it. This ocean of felicity being so shoreless, and so bottomless, that

that all the saints and angels cannot exhaust it, it being as impossible for an aggregate of finites, to comprehend or exhaust one infinite, as it is for the greatest number of mathematic points to amount to, or constitute, a body. Our neighbour-regions do all enjoy the benefit of light as well as we; yet we enjoy not less, than if they enjoyed none. Indeed there is this difference between the sun of righteousness and that of heaven; that, whereas the latter, by his presence, eclipses all the planets, (his attendants;) the former, though radiant with a much mightier splendor, will, by his presence, impart to his saints, according to that of the apostle; *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.* So that the elect, in relation to this sun, shall not be like stars, which his shining obscures and makes to disappear; but like polished silver, or well-glazed arms, or those vaster balls of burnished brass, the tops of churches are sometimes adorned with, which shine not till they be shined upon, and derive their glittering brightness, and all the dazzling fire that environs and illustrates them, from their being exposed (unskreened) to the sun's refulgent beams. *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine,* says every faint (with the spouse

164 SERAPHIC LOVE.

spouse in the Canticles) to his redeemer^k, David says of them that put their trust in God, *That he shall abundantly satisfy them with the fatness of his house, and make them drink of the river of his pleasures*^l: As if he meant to insinuate, that, as when a multitude of persons drink of the same river, none of them is able to exhaust it, and yet each of them may have the full liberty of drinking as much as he can, or as much as he could, though none but himself should be allowed to drink of it; so, whosoever enjoys him wholly, or at least doth enjoy him so entirely, in relation to that man's capacity, that the fruition of whatsoever rests unenjoyed of God, is forbidden by the immensity of the object, and not the pre-possession of his rivals. The angels, though of a nature differing from ours, and thereby placed above the personal experience of our sufferings and infirmities, do yet so sympathize with us, that (as our Saviour informs us) they rejoyce at the repentance of a sinner^m. And, though the members of the church-milant, and those of the triumphant, live as far asunder, as heaven is from earth, and are not more distant as to place, than differing as to condition; yet St. Paul reckons
all

^k Cant. vi. 3. ^l Psa. xxxvi. 6. ^m Luke xv. 7.

all the saints to be but *one family in heaven and earth*^a. If then the disparity of residences, of qualities, and of conditions, cannot now hinder the lovers of God from being so concerned in one another; how much of endearing kindness, may we suppose, that they will interchange, when both their love shall be perfected, and all those other graces too that are proper to cherish and encrease it? For, the same apostle, who, to assist us to conceive the strictness of the union both betwixt Christ and his saints, and the saints among themselves, tells us, that *He is the head, and they are his body, and members in particular*^o; teaches us to make this inference, that (to express his doctrine in his own words) *If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and if one member be honoured, all the members rejoyce with it*^p. Yes, Lindamor, in that blessed condition, our wills being perfectly conformed unto our maker's, no saint nor angel can enjoy his love without possessing a proportionate degree of ours. And then, since perfect friendship appropriates to each friend the crosses and prosperities of the other, (as good Barzillai could not
be

^a Eph. iii. 15. ^o 1 Cor. xii. 27. ^p Verse 26.

166 SERAPHIC LOVE.

be highlier obliged by David ⁹, than by the king's kindness to his son) each several beatitude in heaven shall (in some sort concern the whole society, and) be ours. As astronomers teach us, that the earth receives addition of light by the sun's beams bestowed upon the stars, and from the moon reflecting upon her. And because our personal capacities are too too narrow to contain all that joy, we are (by the strange arithmetic of friendship) in a manner multiplied into as many happy persons, as there are saints and angels blessed in heaven. Our perfect union to our common head, and mutual communion with each other, applying and bringing home every felicity of theirs to us. This friendly and reciprocal sympathy, teaching us each glorified saint's blessedness, and him ours, by a blessed circulation, which makes us encrease, by our resenting them, those joys (of others) whose encrease we resent. But my thoughts are engaged in so good a company, Lindamor, that they keep me from considering how fast the hours pass, and have almost made me forget, that the time which my occasions allowed me for scribbling to you, is so far spent, that not now at last to reprieve you

you from the persecution of my blunt pen, were to be almost as injurious to my own affairs, as to your patience. Hereafter yet I may possibly make you some amends for this with riper discourses of the nature and duties, or (if you will) the properties and returns of this love, to which I have hitherto presented you some motives. To (the last of) which I might add, that, our love to the creature is an earnest, but to God it is a title; the one makes us the objects, but the other makes the object ours; that, since there is in love so strange a magic, as to transform the lover into the objects loved; we ought to be extremely careful of the dedication of a passion, which, as it is placed, must either dignify our nature, or degrade it: And not to address to any lower (or, which is all one, to any other) object, the highest intensity of a love, which cannot stoop without our degradation. And these I might expatiate on, and recruit them with many other motives, additional to those I have already insisted on; but that I may more properly reserve them to the treatise of the properties of that love, whose nature so partakes that of its object, that there can hardly be produced
more

168 SERAPHIC LOVE.

more powerful motives to it, than the conditions of it. Since then (as I freshly intimated) I cannot but fear that your tired patience, as well as my urgent occasions (though these will recall me to-morrow morning to my own western hermitage) doth at present summon me to leave you; and since I cannot do so in a happier place than heaven, I shall suspend my farewell, only to beg you to believe, that so noble a motive of exalting friendship, as the ambition of rendering mine a fit return for yours, hath so improved my kindness, that my affection, without wronging its greatness, could not express itself by any less attempt, than this giving you the greatest, and the most desirable of all goods, by elevating (that noble harbinger of your soul) your love to heaven; whose joys alone are not inferior to those which the being made instrumental to procure them you, would really create in, my dearest Lindamor,

*Your most faithful, most affectionate,
and most humble servant,*

ROBERT BOYLE.

From *Lease* this 6th
of Aug. 1648.

F I N I



